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ON THE HEIGHTS BY BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ON THE HEIGHTS

BY

BERTHOLD AUERBACH.

TRANSLATED BY

F. E. BUNNETT.

Second Authorized Edition, thoroughly revised.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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ON THE HEIGHTS.

FIFTH BOOK.

(CONTINUED.)

TENTH CHAPTER.

IRMA was on a foot path which led among high forest trees. She advanced with a firm and sure step. The foot path soon led into a broad forest road.

Lightning ever and anon played in the distant sky, breaking up the gloom, and revealing a firmament which lay behind the darkness of the night.

Irma scarcely looked up, she thought of nothing else than of finding her way. It was silent in the wood; only now and then something groaned sorrowfully like the sobbing of a human being. It must come from a hollow tree, she thought. But the groaning still went on, always in advance of her. She looked for the hollow tree, but she could not find it; she went on further, still deeper into the forest. Presently she ran up the mountain, then all was silent. The path was lost, but in the distance shone the object of her search; a glimpse of the moon-lit lake. She went further and further through the pathless wood, treading down the soft moss. Sometimes she heard the twitter-

ing of birds in the tops of the trees, a martin or a weasel was destroying the young ones in their nests. In the world, thought Irma, it is always life taking life. Men destroy and kill each other, but they don't eat each other, that alone distinguishes them from beasts. And one thing besides — yes, one thing besides! that is it! Man alone can kill himself. Irma grew dizzy at the thought. She supported herself against a tree, and then she walked on. Only no weakness! for firmly and determinedly must the unalterable resolve be accomplished. She went on further through the thick forest. Her cheeks glowed, the perspiration stood on her forehead, but inwardly she felt as if she were freezing.

Something rustled through the thicket before her, it was a stag which she had frightened from its cover. The animal was afraid of her and she was afraid of the animal, she fancied she could already feel its antlers as if they were piercing her through; she fled down the mountain side with nimble step; she still heard in the distance the crackling of the underwood, and then all was silent. The wind whistled among the tops of the trees, the waters murmured sometimes far and sometimes near, and then she heard the roaring of a mountain stream dashing down from the rocks; she saw the moon-lit foam, she knew no longer where she was, whether she were going towards the lake or from it. She pictured to herself the having lost her way in the forest, the sinking down here and being found, and brought back again to life and misery. . . . She gathered together all her strength and walked on. The night air blew coolly upon her, but her cheeks glowed with fire; she clasped her brow — it was like a hot spring flowing from the spot which had been touched. She looked up at the stars, she

saw well known constellations, she knew their position, but the great waymarks in infinite space, led not a solitary, erring child of man on her evil way through the forest. Irma thought of the nights when the physician had directed her observation to the vast expanse, how annihilated was now every thing in her, how fallen was all that was noble in her, even her gaze at the heavens seemed obstructed. She began to reflect whether she had burned the letters or left them behind; she fancied she remembered having burned that to the king; but not that to the queen. She reflected backwards and forwards till she grew confused. Perhaps both letters would be found. Well — be it so!

And then Walpurga's song passed through her mind.

If the good peasant woman by the lake knew, she thought, how her friend was now wandering alone in the dark night through the wood, and with what thoughts; she would come near, and draw her to herself and not let her go; who knows whether she was not now thinking of her in the distance, dreaming of her, and therefore sending her through the midnight air her song, like some intangible messenger? How would the poor woman mourn, she thought, when she heard of her death; perhaps she would be the only one who would truly lament her.

A thousand fancies flitted through her mind. Years hence, a sailor like the one by the island convent, would tell the story of the drowned maid-of-honor. What effect would the tidings of her death have upon people? None of you can help me, she thought, and I cannot help you, and the day after to-morrow you

will be playing cards again and dancing and singing. None can keep the other in remembrance; he who is not present, has no right to be held in remembrance. Life is as unmerciful as death. . . .

She went further through the thicket, past wild ravines; the stones which loosened under her tread, tumbled down into the precipice below, and the dull hollow sound told her how deep they had fallen. The rocks came closer together, the mountain torrent rushed down over them, and all at once she came upon the rocky abyss, forbidding further advance. The thought arose to throw herself down and dash herself to pieces! but then to lie perhaps for days half dead and bruised and languishing? No —!

She sought for a path. A branch struck her in the face, just where her father's deadly cold finger had touched her.

"No," she exclaimed, "this brow shall never more see the daylight," and she sought for a path by the rocky declivity, and held fast with her closed hands. Suddenly the shrill cry from a woman's voice resounded through the wood. Irma drew her breath; that was a human voice, a woman's voice, perhaps a girl, a sweet fresh child, giving her lover a signal in the night. The shrill tones were repeated again and again, and grew more and more urgent, and Irma sat on the rock in fear and trembling; she answered with a scream. She was startled with her own voice, but she screamed again and again; and now answers came nearer, the voice approached, some dogs sprang forward, they were already at Irma's side, barking as a signal, that they had found a prey; and the woman's voice came nearer and nearer.

"Where are you?" it asked.

"Here," answered Irma.

"Where?"

"Here."

"Up there?"

"Yes."

"How did you get up there?"

"I don't know."

"Keep quiet, don't move from the place! I'll come."

"Yes."

Some time elapsed, and at last something emerged below Irma.

"So, there you are," said the figure. She threw a rope to Irma and told her to bind it round her body and make fast the other end to some rock or tree, and then to slide quietly down.

Irma did as she was told. She hovered between heaven and earth, and in this short moment a thousand indefinable ideas passed through her mind. She reached the female figure in safety. The latter seized her hand at once and led her on. Irma followed involuntarily. She tore herself in scrambling through, till they came to a narrow rocky path. The stream rushed below, but the powerful female figure held Irma fast by the hand, as if with an iron grasp.

"Where you have been, not even a chamois hunter ventures. There — now we are above, there's our cottage," said the dark figure at last. "It's a wonder that you weren't hurled to the bottom, and you have such a long dress too."

"Who are you?" inquired Irma.

"Tell me first who you are, and how you came here?"

"That I can't tell you."

"Well I don't care. They call me black Esther."

"Who are you bringing?" called out an awful looking woman at the cottage door; behind her the hearth fire was burning.

"I don't know; — a woman."

Irma went towards the cottage with black Esther. The old woman crossed herself and exclaimed:

"All good spirits praise God the Lord — that is the water nymph!"

"I am no spirit," said Irma, "I am a weary child of man. Let me rest for a while, and then let your daughter go with me to shew me the way to the lake. I only now want a drop of water!"

"No, that would be your death, you mayn't drink no water now; I am cooking some warm porridge here, and I'll bring you some of that."

She led Irma into the room within, and seeing her hand with a diamond ring on it, she grinned with satisfaction:

"Heigh! the beautiful ring; that's from your sweet-heart."

"Take the ring, take it and keep it!" said Irma, holding out her hand.

The old woman drew the ring with great dexterity from her finger.

"Good Heavens," cried the old woman suddenly, "I have seen you once before, — yes, yes, it was you. . . . Haven't you once worn a gold heart and sent it to a child? Didn't you once order them to give something to eat to an old woman in the palace, and got her son set free, and gave her money to boot? Good Heavens! yes, you are the —"

"Speak not my name! Let me only rest one moment, ask me nothing and say nothing more!"

"No, as you desire it, certainly not; I will now get your porridge ready quickly."

She went out and left Irma alone.

Irma lay on the bed which was nothing but a sack of leaves; it crackled so strangely when she turned her head, and the leaves said: Aye! when we were green it was otherwise.... The moon shone in through the window. Irma felt bewildered; it seemed to her as if she were in the open sea, but she soon fell asleep.

When she awoke, she heard a man's loud voice.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

OUTSIDE in the entrance which served the purpose of kitchen, Thomas was standing with his mother. He was cleaning his blackened face, and taking off his false beard, and he said:

"Mother, do you know what I'm sorry for?"

"Well, what?"

"That I didn't shoot the young count three days ago. He won't come again so convenient. I could have shot him direct through the neck, and he must have fallen and never spoken again; I could have put a bullet through his body so that the sun might have shone through him."

"You're a fine fellow with your repentance!"

"Aye, and I'd have done a good deed if I had shot the fellow. Think, mother, what sort of people these grand folk are, who own the forest and the wild

things in it. Think of that, mother, and then say I am an honest fellow."

"How so?"

"Only think, mother. Do you know why the count was in the forest? He didn't want to be present when his father was dying, so he rode away and let the old man come to his end alone. I promise you, if you were going to die, and I was here, I'd stay with you. I should have deserved well of heaven, if I had put that fellow out of the way. If I had known it at the time, I would have done so; I wanted to do it for a joke. My only pleasure is now in thinking how the fellow must have trembled; to have to ride away from me so, and I with my bullets behind him, so that at any moment — oh, you Wildenort!"

At the mention of her family name, Irma started as if shot. She rose quickly, and listened, holding her breath, as Thomas continued outside:

"Since then I have been like a bewitched thing; nothing comes across me any more, and I am such a fool! to-day in the twilight something passed me by — the devil take it, one must believe in spirits. — Mother, I met a horse, such a beauty and no one on it. Supposing it was a real horse that one gets money for? but I am such a fool, that I let myself be so frightened as it galloped past with its flowing mane and clattering horse-hoofs. But before I had rightly considered that it was really a horse, and that all ghost stories were stupid stuff — Heyday, it was gone!"

"Nay, Thomas, take care, there is something true with them spirits. Come, stand here, hold your hand over the fire, and swear to me that you will keep quiet, and then I'll tell you something."

"What do you know?"

"More than comes into your thick head. I tell you there are spirits, and on the bed in there, the water nymph is lying."

"Mother, you're gone crazed."

"Pay attention! She has ordered me to cook her a dish of porridge."

"Aye, so the water nymphs eat porridge then? I don't fear any creature that eats cooked things. I should like to take a look at this water nymph!"

The old woman tried to hold him back. He forced his way into the room, and stood like one paralysed, when he looked at Irma:

"She's a woman like you, only much more beautiful. If it were the water nymph, she would have had a swan's foot, so far as I know. Who is it, mother?"

"I don't know."

"Then I'll ask her."

The old woman endeavoured to restrain him. But Irma had already got up. She looked fixedly at them, her lips were open, but she could not speak.

"It is you," cried Thomas suddenly, "that is splendid!"

He wanted to seize her, but Zenza held him off.

"It is you," he cried again. "Have you lost your way and are here? that is splendid!"

"Do you know me?"

"Who does not know you? You are the king's sweetheart! And now you are. . . ."

A loud cry of despair from Irma drowned the last words of the wild fellow.

"Hurra!" shouted Thomas, "out with you, mother! out with you, Esther! I don't want you."

"Let her go, you dare not do anything to her," cried the mother.

"I dare not! and who's to hinder me?"

The mother struggled with him, but he hurled her back. Then, not knowing how to help herself any longer, she seized the boiling porridge, and swore that she would pour it over his face; he warded it off, staggered back, and bellowed like a bull.

Esther hastened to Irma, and whispered hurriedly:

"Come! come! for your father's sake I'll save you; come! away!"

She tore her away with her, and she hastened up the mountain, without halting and breathless. Irma could not go further, she wanted to rest; but Esther dragged her on for a little way, till they reached a spring, and there they sat down. Esther wetted her hands, and bathed Irma's brow and her own.

For a time neither of them spoke a word. At last Irma asked:

"Do you know the way to the lake?"

"Oh! well! that is my way too, my way of escape, I have no other."

"How, what do you mean?"

"What you want to do, I want to do also; I shall have to do it."

"And what is it that I want to do?"

"To drown yourself."

Irma started at hearing her design so declared.

"I don't know," continued Esther, "but I can well imagine what drives you to it. My brother has spoken a bad word, but I beg you not to do it! Look here, you are still so beautiful, so young and rich; you have still life before you, and your lot in the-world may

still be different. Don't do it. Hush!" said she, suddenly interrupting herself, "didn't you hear something? we won't talk now, so that we may hear every thing, he'll come after us; he won't leave us. Now get up, we must go on."

They rose, and walked on further through the gloomy forest.

A vision from hell passed before Irma's mind: There in eternity would the noble and the lowly born, whom sin, like virtue, renders equal, be chained and linked to each other, suffering an equal fate. . . .

They walked again by a wildly-rushing stream, and Esther inquired:

"Then you are his sister?"

"Whose?"

"My Bruno's. How fares it with him? I saw him some days ago, when I was looking for ants' eggs, but he didn't see me. Is it true that he is happily married?"

"Yes — but why do you call him your Bruno?"

"Well, I will tell you; you are the first who has heard his name from my lips since that day. Has he never spoken of it himself to you?"

"Never."

"But he can't have forgotten it. Come away — Thomas could find us here; take my hand and go backwards, and then the dogs will lose the scent."

Esther took Irma by the hand and led her under a rocky projection. They sat down, and black Esther related as follows:

"My mother knows nothing of it, nor my brother either. No one knows the right; I'll tell it to you. This isn't really our home, but in summer we are

often here, and look for gentian, and medicinal herbs, and ants' eggs. I was fifteen years old — a merry wild girl, — I could have run a wager with any stag, — when your brother found me in the wood. He was handsome, very handsome, there is not another so handsome in the world; and he was fine and good too, and we loved each other so dearly, and I always wept when I had to go home again to my mother. I would gladly have remained out there in the forest like the deer, and it almost did me good when I got home and my mother beat me; for then I was able to weep, and yet I might not say why I wept. I longed for him every moment, and never wished to be away from him. He once told me who he was, and that his father was a very severe man, and that but for him he would have taken me home to his castle, and that I should have been a countess. And then — I thought of it a thousand times since, what a simple child I was, but I certainly intended nothing evil — do you know what I did? because my Bruno complained so bitterly, I thought this bad father is still to be got round, and I went to the castle and straight to your father, and told him that he mustn't be so cruel and so hard-hearted, and he must let Bruno marry me, and that I would be a good daughter-in-law, and that we loved each other so, and that as long as the world lasted there could not be two who would have each other more dear. And your father looked at me — I shall never forget his eyes, I see them now before me, so large and so brilliant; and a little while ago, when Thomas was so free with you, you too had just such eyes, just his eyes, and that moved me to pity for you, and that was why I helped you away."

"And the rest?" asked Irma after a long pause.

"Yes, the rest," continued Esther, composing herself. "And then your father came forward to me, and I stooped, for I thought he was going to strike me. But he put his hand on my head and said: 'You are a good child, even though you have somewhat erred; and nothing shall be wanting on my part to keep you good.' Then he called a servant and ordered Bruno to come. And he came, and when he saw me he was frightened, but I said: 'Don't be afraid, your father is a heartily good man, and he gives you to me as my husband.' But Bruno did not stir from the place, and your father called out, 'Come here! come here!' But still he did not stir from the spot, and he was as white as the cloth of the table against which he was leaning, and then your father said to him: 'Well, I will come to you; you have not behaved honourably, but you shall still be able to be honourable. Here is this child out of the forest' — yes, he said just this — 'I permit you, nay, I command you, to take her as your wife.' Then Bruno laughed — it was the devil that laughed in him, and that laugh too I shall never forget; and your father said again, 'Speak, Bruno.' And then he said, 'Father, don't make yourself ridiculous!' And your father's face at that moment looked as if he were all at once thirty years older, and he tottered and had to sit down on a chair. 'What do you say?' he asked. 'Repeat it once more! Speak!' And Bruno repeated his words again, twisting his moustache as he spoke. Your father talked to him kindly, and told him how he would instruct me in everything, so that I should be able to read and write well, and do everything as

well as a countess, for that otherwise Bruno would draw upon himself a burden which he would not be free from all his life. And then Bruno said, 'I will leave the room if you don't send the girl away! Go, Esther, go out of the room, and don't come again till I call you!' He said something in a foreign tongue to your father, and your father grew pale and came up to me, and gave me his hand, and said: 'Go, Esther!' He did not say a word more, but he said that kindly and heartily. And so I went. That was the last time I saw Bruno, and I have since heard there was terrible work between your father and him. But I never let myself be seen again; I didn't want to be the cause of enmity between father and son, and I have seen that it wouldn't have done, and it was better for our child that it was born dead; it is better than to have a life of misery and then to die. Don't you think so too?"

Irma did not answer, but she felt for the speaker's hand.

Esther continued:

"And my mother and Thomas don't know that I ever knew your brother; but Thomas is a terrible fellow, and he has a hatred against your brother as if he foreboded it. But I say nothing. I am lost — what does it matter? He shan't perish too — and I have loved him so, that I can't even now forget it."

Suddenly Esther interrupted her quiet narrative, and screamed aloud:

"He has a beautiful, fine, rich, noble wife. Yes, to this end we are here, that nothing may befall you in your silken beds out yonder! Ha! ha! ha! and when the children come, they get a poor woman to

nurse them. Walpurga, she's well off — she's well off — her nursing turned to gold! Oh if I could only help thinking!"

She tore her hair, and cried passionately:

"This hair, this stupid black hair; it must have long ago been parched up and burnt with all the heavy hot thoughts that have passed through my brain. Oh, my head is so hot, and I get blows on it daily; but it is hard — knock it — it is hard as steel!"

Irma stood as if rooted to the spot.

"Hush!" said Esther; "hush, I hear the dogs; I said so — he is hunting after us. Fly! fly! there to the right — there's the path! But for the sake of every thing in the world, I beg you, don't do it — don't do it! You have not yet gone so far as that you must. Now fly, down below there you'll come to a wooden bridge; go over that — go away! I will stay. The dogs will come to me — I will detain him. You are saved! — away! fly!"

She urged Irma away and remained behind.

Irma hastened on alone. She often clasped her brow as thoughts flashed through her. A grateful remembrance of her father had saved her from inconceivable horrors. He had laid his hand forgivingly on the head of the lost one, but he had engraven his rejection of herself on her forehead. "The brand upon my brow can only be cooled by the deep lake," she kept saying ever and anon to herself, as she hastened over the wooden bridge, and then up a height till the dark forest again concealed her. . . .

Black Esther stood quietly, and let the dogs approach her; she allured them, and the dogs sprang up

to her. She heard Thomas whistle, and the dogs answered; he was still far off, but he was on the track. She counted every pulsation, for with every pulsation, Irma was a step forward out of the reach of pursuit. She would suffer anything patiently — what did it matter?

"Yes, yes; I know that you are glad to find me," said she to the grey wolf-dog, which fawned upon her. "Yes, you are the only creature in the world which still loves me. I wish I had been a dog too! — why haven't I become a dog? If it were only true, as mother says, that there once were times when people were transformed."

She again heard Thomas whistle and cry, the dogs answered; he came nearer, and presently stood at her side.

"So it's you, is it? I thought so; where's the other?"

"Where you'll never find her."

A pitiful cry resounded through the wood.

"Only strike me dead at once," cried Esther.

The dogs howled in between — they knew not whom they ought to help.

Thomas went away, leaving Esther lying where she had fallen.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

THE sun stood in glory in the heaven; and among the trees on the wood's edge, stretched on the soft moss, lay a beautiful female form clothed in blue. The sunbeams were trembling on her face; she woke, and,

supporting her head with its rich brown hair on her hand, she gazed around as if lost.

The air was full of the fragrance of the pine-trees, and the fresh coolness from the lake; the bells of the grazing cattle rang on the hill-side, the dew glittered, all was brilliant — only to her it was night everywhere. It was long before she believed that she was awake — before she remembered where she was. She was at last conscious of herself, but still she moved not. Heavily and gloomily the thought passed through her mind — why awake again? Oh, unmerciful nature! why cannot deep agony of soul annihilate thee? Why dost thou require a force against thee? Fire, water, steel, poison? Why cannot the soul, with its power of destruction, also kill the body? Sun, what dost thou want with me? I want thee no longer — my brow here is burning with the dead hand of my father, and conscience within me is hammering with a thousand beats, and breaks me not up — why? — why?

She closed her eyes, and turned away from the sun. Something whispered to her: "There is time yet; everything may have been but a base adventure, a dream — turn back! You can, you may, you have expiated enough . . ."

As if drawn by some invisible power, she turned again to the sun. The lake was sparkling below her, and its waves seemed murmuring: "Deep in my depths all thought, all perplexity of mind, all fear, and all doubt is at an end!"

She rose, and as she saw the impression of her own figure in the moss where she had lain, she looked fixedly on it. So, thought she, the stag looks at his nightly couch when the fatal shot is in him. What

are we more than hunted animals in a forest? . . . It is all vain . . . what use is it to torture one's mind? One bold leap can put an end to everything — it is that . . .

She put on her hat, and walked on, alone in the world, with the one idea; she appealed to nothing — she was mistress over life and death.

The blackberry bushes caught her dress, and held her fast; she disengaged herself, and the thorns scratched her hands and feet. She felt an unconquerable hunger, and she wept like a forsaken child.

Her tears relieved her.

She saw fresh berries, and she plucked and ate them with eagerness. A couple of birds flew out from the bushes; here was their nest, but it was empty; everything in the world, thought Irma, has its home . . . She stood forlorn. She turned her glance — see there, by the side of the blackberries there were poisonous berries, belladonna . . . he who hungers for death can feed there . . . but Irma plucked not the poisonous berries, she had no wish to die in lengthy torments, perhaps only half to kill herself, to swoon away, and to fall again into the hands of men. No, better far the unfathomable lake!

Irma disentangled herself quickly as if she had loitered on the way, and walked on. The dew wetted her wounded feet; she froze, and trembled.

Suddenly a burst of merry music and a blast of trumpets sounded through the air. Irma clasped her brow. It can be no music, she thought; it is only the dream of my imagination alluring to the pleasures of the world, and calling with violin, clarinet, and trumpet, "Come, soothe yourself with our sounds; be merry

and enjoy the days allotted to you . . .” But hark! again came the sound, and yet again; and now the report of a small cannon, which reverberated from the mountains in a thousand rolling echoes. In some quiet little village yonder, they must be celebrating a wedding. Perhaps a maiden and a youth, who have loved and been true to each other, are being united to-day, and music and cannon are calling to the mountains: “Rejoice with us! the happiness of love is as eternal as you are . . .”

Irma wandered on absorbed in reverie, looking down on the ground — her thoughts were with the happy ones; she saw the glad looks of the parents, the comrades, and friends, she heard the blessing of the priest — and as she thought, her steps wandered on through the dewy grass and bushes. She held her hand firmly clenched, as though actually grasping the intention which was leading her on her way. She walked along by the lake. The shore here was flat, a reedy swamp — there would be no sudden death here, only a slow suffering sinking; she walked round and round, ran hither and thither, with hasty step, and quick breath. At last she came to a rocky projection on the shore, where the steep cliff was perpendicular. She clambered up, she raised her hands, and bent over — hark . . . there was a cry . . . who could be crying here? she heard a pitiful scream from the water, a cry for help, a splash; her hat rolled down from the rock into the water — she saw a human figure wrestling with the waves — it rose — it was black Esther — it rose and sunk and floated away.

With a shrill cry Irma threw herself down upon the rock, she had seen her own deed before her, all

her limbs felt paralyzed, she lay as if in the depths of the lake, she felt herself and yet could not rise, something called within her, but no cry pierced the air.

Presently — as she lay there, she heard voices singing:

“We two are so united,
So happily allied,
That blissful are the moments
When we are side by side.

Irma sprang up. What could it be?

She sprang down from the rock as if another power were impelling her. She wiped the tears from her eyes, blood was mingled with them — had she been weeping tears of blood?

A large boat was drawing nearer and nearer . . . It was Walpurga's voice which was calling, she was coming, she had recognized her friend, and Irma fled. — Walpurga sprang to shore, pursued her — she fled further, Walpurga reached her and embraced her, and Irma sunk down upon her.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

Walpurga knelt by the fainting one, and the blood trickled from a wound on her forehead. Walpurga quickly unfastened her handkerchief, bound it round the bleeding brow, gathered some wet grass, and shook the dew in her face. Then in despair she called out: “Dearest Countess, good, loving, dear Countess, wake up again! For God's sake, what is the matter? Oh! Wake up again! Irma! Irma!”

Irma opened her eyes.

They heard Hansei's voice calling:

"Walpurga! Where are you? Walpurga!"

"Is that your husband? don't let him come here, he must not see me!" burst forth Irma.

"Stay there!" cried Walpurga, emerging from the bushes. "Send mother here and let her bring some wine, some of that which I brought with me, it is in the blue chest with the child's things. Go quickly. That's right!"

With short hurried words Irma told her that her father was dead, and that she had herself sought death in the lake. She clasped her brow, and drew her hand back in alarm:

"Oh! what is this?"

"You have bled. You must have fallen on a stone. Look," said she, compelling herself to a cheerful tone, "this is the little green handkerchief you sent my child."

Irma tore off the bandage, and contemplated silently the handkerchief stained with blood.

"That will quench the fire of my brow. Let it run," said she, as if to herself. Then she continued: "Oh! Walpurga, I cannot die, I cannot kill myself — and I cannot live! — I have — I have been — wicked ——"

She hid her face against Walpurga's heart, which beat loud and violently.

"Come, quickly, tell me, help me, tell me what I shall do, before your mother comes."

"I don't know, — I don't know at all, — my mother will know, she knows help for everything. There, see the blood on your forehead has stopped, only be quiet!"

The mother came. Irma looked at her as on

some angel of deliverance, and the mother said with a certainty in which there was no wavering and questioning:

"Walpurga — that is your Countess!"

"Yes, mother."

"Then welcome a thousand times," said the old woman, "here you have both my hands. Sad things must have happened to you. You have fallen, or has any one struck your forehead?"

Irma answered not. She sat between the two women, who supported her, and her gaze was as fixed as though she were lifeless.

"Mother, help her — say something to her," said Walpurga.

"No, only let her quietly come to herself, every wound must bleed itself out," said the mother soothingly.

Irma grasped her hands, kissed them and exclaimed:

"Mother! You are my deliverance. Mother! I will remain with you. Take me with you!"

"Yes, that I'll do. Thou'lt see up there in my home, it's ever so healthy, there's an air and a water there, such as there's nowhere else in the world; there thou'lt get well again, and it will all wear away. Does thy father know that thou hast so run away into the wild world, and does he know why?"

"He did know; he is dead. Walpurga, tell her how it is with me."

"There's time enough for that, if God will, we shall have plenty of time together; and you can tell me it all when you are quiet. Now come, take a drink."

With some trouble the two women succeeded in drawing out the silver-foiled cork; Walpurga extracted it at last with her teeth. Irma drank.

"Drink," said Walpurga, "the physician gave me that wine for my mother, so it is of course wholesome. But she doesn't drink it. She says she'll wait till she gets old, and needs strength from wine."

A melancholy smile passed over Irma's face; the aged woman before her would wait till she got old!

Irma was obliged to take more sips of the wine. When she complained of pain in her foot, the mother understood how to draw out a thorn skilfully. As if a gentle angel were touching her, Irma looked down on the old woman, and again tried to kiss her hands.

"My hands have never been kissed but by thee, so long as I have been born," said the old woman, drawing them aside, "but I understand what thou mean'st. I have never touched a countess in my life, but they are just human beings like us."

Irma sighed deeply. She then declared that she would go with her deliverers, but only on condition that no one besides themselves knew who she was; that she wished to live concealed and unknown, and that if she were discovered she would kill herself.

"Don't do that no more," interrupted the old woman severely, "don't say that again! One mayn't trifle with such things. That's no threat. But there, thou hast my hand, not a word shall pass my lips."

"Nor mine either," cried Walpurga, and she laid her hand with that of her mother upon Irma's.

"Tell me one thing," asked the mother, "why dost thou not go into a convent? One can do that again now."

"I wish to expiate in freedom."

"I understand thee, thou art right."

Not a word more was spoken. The mother held her hand on Irma's brow, round which she now bound a white handkerchief.

"It'll be healed in a week, and there'll be nothing more seen of it," she said consolingly.

"The white handkerchief shall remain as long as I am obliged to live," replied Irma. She now asked for other clothes, before she should appear before Hansei.

Walpurga hastened back to the little inn on the landing place. Here she found Hansei very angry; his rage had been excited, any interruption was provoking to him, and there lay, as he said, enough upon him, for he was more hardly worked than the horses in the waggon; in fact he was in that irritable mood from travel and change of abode, in which the inner life feels homeless and restless, and is easily stirred into anger. Moreover the foal, beautiful as it was, had caused considerable inconvenience; it had torn away, and had almost got under the wheels of a waggon.

Hansei was very angry. Walpurga had great difficulty in appeasing him, and she at last said with tears: "Sooner than go into our new home in anger and hatred, I had rather we had all gone to the bottom in the boat."

"Well, well, I am quiet, only be you so too," said Hansei, recovering himself, and looking towards the lake, as if the head of black Esther were rising again; then he continued: "but we must go on, or it will be pitch-dark night before we get there, if we don't start. It's still far, and the horses have a heavy load. What

are you about there? Whom have you got among the willow trees yonder?"

"You shall know all about it afterwards. Believe me now, that what the mother and I are doing will be a satisfaction to us for life. I am glad that God has given me something to do at this time. I would like to have asked Him what I could do to shew my gratitude to Him. She's a good honest creature, and you will be satisfied."

Walpurga spoke so earnestly and impressively, that Hansei said:

"I'll go on with the waggons with the household stuff, and you can come afterwards in the covered waggon, when it suits you, but soon. Uncle is there, and he'll drive you."

Walpurga went to her chest, took out a whole suit, and nodded to Hansei, who went up the mountain with the loaded waggons. She brought the clothes to the thicket by the lake; she found Irma sitting by her mother; the mother holding her in her arms, and Irma's head resting on her breast.

"Our Irmgard will be quite happy with us, we know each other already," said the mother.

No one on earth heard what Irma confessed to the old Beate alone among the willow trees by the lake. The old woman breathed thrice on her brow, as if to break the spell with her warm breath.

"There, now put on our clothes," said Beate.

Deep within the thicket, Irma put on the peasant dress.

She kept her eyes fixed on the ground, when she again came out of the thicket. It was a new earth, a new existence, upon which she was now entering.

She looked at the people and the things in the inn parlour, as if in a dream. She had come back into the world again from the depths of the lake. There were people there, life was going on, there was eating and drinking, laughing and chattering, singing, driving, riding, — and all this she had already left far behind her. She was like one risen from the dead. Silent and with her hands folded, she sat on the seat, she wished to know nothing of the world around, she longed for solitude, profound solitude; and yet her hearing was so acute that she heard, when the hostess said softly to Walpurga: “that’s a kinswoman, may be? She doesn’t seem in her right wits.” And she pointed to her forehead.

“You may be right,” replied Walpurga.

A painful smile passed over Irma’s beautiful lips. There is a protecting veil, she thought; it is madness.

She felt as if a thorny net were laid upon her head; for madness is indeed a magic covering under which one can live concealed, but only in deep pain.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE grandmother arranged outside a bed in the covered waggon, and told her brother who drove it, that he should drive steadily on and not crack his whip so much; for uncle Peter, surnamed the little pitch-man, stood there cracking his whip with pleasure that for once a whip and two horses had been entrusted to him.

“And who is the stranger who is so tender,” asked

the little pitch-man, putting the whip cord in his mouth, as if to bite it to prevent its cracking loudly.

"A poor sick woman," said Beate. It was difficult for her to say it, and yet it was really no lie.

Hansei was on in front with the great waggons. At last the women agreed also that it was time to start. Irma now for the first time saw Walpurga's child, and as her eye met that of the little one, it shouted and wanted to go to her.

"Hi! that is beautiful," cried Walpurga and the mother at the same time, "she's generally so shy."

Irma took the child in her arms, and embraced and kissed it. It was as if in this innocent child, she again renewed her own childhood which had withered and passed away; her expression varied with joy and sadness, and the grandmother said.

"You have a good honest heart, and children feel that and know it. There, now give the child to Walpurga, and get up."

The place on the bed had been arranged for Irma, and when the grandmother had got up, she took the child to herself, and sat down with it by Irma's side in the interior of the waggon. Walpurga and Gundel sat in front, looking out into the open air, the uncle walked by the side of the horses, looking sorrowfully at the whip which he might not crack. No one spoke a word, only the child laughed and prattled and wanted to play with Irma.

"Thou must sleep now," said the grandmother, and softly humming an air, she sung the child and Irma too to sleep.

"Who are those coming down the mountain," said Walpurga suddenly to the uncle.

"One is a gendarme, and the other looks like a gentleman's servant."

Walpurga started, for as the two horsemen approached, she recognized Baum; she slipped quickly into the waggon, leaving Gundel sitting alone in front.

The horsemen came nearer, and halted at the waggon; the child awoke and cried, and Irma awoke also. She looked through the canvas covering and recognized Baum. Only a thin curtain separated her from him. The horse which Baum rode, distended its nostrils, threw up its head, and tossed its mane, and pawed the ground so that it was difficult to hold him in check. Irma recognized him, it was Pluto, her own horse; it had therefore been caught and brought back. If the horse could have spoken, it would have said: here is my mistress, here is she whom you seek.

Irma heard Baum asking the uncle:

"Have you not met a lady in a blue riding habit?"

"No."

"Have you perhaps heard of her through others?"

"Not a mortal word."

"Whom have you in the waggon here?"

Irma trembled; Walpurga seized her hand, it was cold. The child cried aloud.

"You hear there's a little child in there," said the gendarme to Baum; "let us ride on."

The horsemen rode on, and Irma saw that Baum had fastened her hat and feather to the pommel of his saddle.

The waggon went slowly up the mountain, the horsemen were galloping down it.

Irma kissed the child, and said:

"You darling child, that's the second time you have saved me. I will also get out, I will walk."

The mother dissuaded her and begged her to remain with her. Irma assented, and scarcely had she again laid down, than she fell asleep, and knew little more of the fact that she was transported over the mountains in a peasant waggon.

Noon was already past, when high up in the mountains, where they baited horses, the women overtook Hansei.

"We'll now keep together," said he, all his former anger had passed away, and he was now doubly friendly. "I think we ought not to reach our new home so scattered, I have strictly instructed the men to drive slowly, we shall be sure to overtake them with our light vehicle, and then we shall be all together. I shall arrive at our farm at once with wife, and child, and mother."

"That's right. I am glad you're so goodhumoured again. Oh! I know you. When you are excited, one has only got to leave you a little alone, and you soon get a longing for your people, and for the old Hansei in yourself, and you're good again. But come here now, I have something to say to you; to-day you will have to prove whether you are really a strong man; then I will never think any thing else all my life than this: 'It's true, men are stronger than we are.'"

"Well, say, what is it then?"

She led him into the garden of the inn, and said:

"Of course you have often heard that in the old times there were fairies and holy maidens, good, blessing-bestowing spirits who never brought anything but happiness and prosperity to a house; but there was

always one condition needed for their remaining: no one might ask them, what they were called, whence they came, and who they were."

"Yes, yes, I have often heard all that, but no one believes in such things now."

"Nor do I desire that you should believe them; but you will have to be put to a test. See, mother and I are bringing in the waggon there a fine and tender creature, she is though strong and powerful, but still something particular, and she will remain with us; but she will be no burden to us. Now, Hansei, say, are you strong enough never to inquire who and whence she is, and never to ask her anything at all? You must simply believe me, that I know her, and know what I am doing when I keep her with us. Will you now, from what I have said, be good and true and honest to her? Say, can you and will you?"

"Is that the matter in which I am to be put to the test whether I am a strong man?"

"Yes, that is it, nothing else."

"I can do that, I give you my hand upon it."

"Give it then."

"You'll see, that I shall hold to what I have promised. That is easy."

"Hansei, it's not so easy as you think."

"At that price," replied Hansei, "that you'll say all your life a man is stronger than a woman, and can better impose anything on himself and keep to it,—at that price you shall see that I can. Your good friend shall be my good friend too, but she isn't crazed, and she doesn't bite, does she?"

"No, you can be quiet on that point."

"Well, settled, not a word more!"

Walpurga went with Hansei to the waggon, drew back the curtain and said:

"Irmgard! my husband wishes to bid you welcome."

"Welcome!" said Irma stretching out her hand to Hansei.

It was not till Walpurga raised his hand, that he offered it to Irma; he was quite stiff with amazement.

As they now drove on, and Hansei walked up the mountain with his wife in front of the waggon, he said:

"Wife, if it weren't day, and you, and the mother, and our child were here, . . . if I didn't know that I was in my senses, and that it was all true — I could have thought you had a holy maiden in human form in the waggon there; is she lame then? can't she walk?"

"She can walk quite well."

Walpurga turned back to the waggon, and called out:

"Irmgard, won't you get out a little, and walk up the mountain with us? it is so very beautiful."

"Yes, gladly," answered a voice within.

Irma alighted, and walked with them both for some distance. Hansei gave many a timid side-glance at her. The stranger limped, perhaps after all it was true, thought he, the water nymph had a swan's foot and could not walk well. He slyly looked towards her feet, but they were just like those of other people. He now ventured to observe her more closely. She had his wife's clothes on, and she was beautiful, vastly beautiful. He raised his hat again and again, for his head was growing hot. What was true then in the world, and what not? Had his wife then a double? and had she another form?

Walpurga lingered behind, and allowed the two to go on alone together. Irma turned over in her mind what she could first say to Hansei; she was on the point of beginning many things, but she rejected them again. For the first time in her life she was in a humble position. How does one speak to one of a lower class? she thought. At length she said:

"You are a happy man, you have wife and child and mother-in-law, such as one could not wish for better on earth."

"Yes, yes, they're good enough," said Hansei. He felt however something of the patronising tone, which lay in Irma's praise, although she had not at all intended it. He had answered in the affirmative, and yet he would really gladly have asked: have you known them then long? but he remembered that he had promised to inquire nothing. Walpurga was right. It was a hard task. He moved his tongue up and down in his mouth, it seemed to him as if it would cling to the roof of it.

"The country is rough here, up yonder when we get to our new home, it's smoother again," he said at last. It had taken some time before he could say even that, for he had wanted to ask whether the stranger had ever been in the neighbourhood; but he dared not ask, and to alter what one wants to say is a hard bit of work.

Irma felt that she must say something quieting to the man, and she began:

"Hansei," his face grew quite bright, when she called him by his name, "Hansei, try to think that you have known me a long time. Don't look upon me as a stranger. I am not ready at beseeching, but

I do beseech you, I know you'll do it, you have an honest face, and it can't be otherwise either, Walpurga's husband, with whom she is so happy, must be a good man, I beseech you therefore, don't have a care, I'll not be burthensome to you."

"Oh! there's no talk of that, we have enough, thank God. One cow more in the stall, and one person more in the house, that can't make much difference, so thou may'st be —" he hesitated at the familiarity of his tone — "so thou may'st be without a care on that point, and.... we have also got an old resident with us and.... what you don't wish to say, I don't wish to know, and when any one on earth would do ought to you, only call me; I have received you, and I will answer for you with my life. But to all appearance, you've not been much used to climbing mountains. I'll give you a bit of advice. In climbing mountains, the rule is, always forwards and never halting."

They both waited for the waggon, Hansei stopped for breath after his long oration; he was satisfied with himself and looked pleased.

Irma sat down on the wayside . . . She was now on the heights, which she had seen yesterday glowing in the evening red and dying away in the white mist. The giant peaks of the mountains which she had seen in the distance, were now close to her and appeared still more mighty. Here and there between the woods, there was a bright strip of field and meadow, and now and then a house was visible. Down below, the forest stream foamed, and here and there the waters sparkled, but their roaring was scarcely heard, so deep and far was it below.

Hansei stood by Irma without speaking a word.

The waggon approached. Irma got in again, Hansei helping her to do so in a very civil way; he was almost on the point of taking off his hat when she thanked him with a friendly look and word.

"That's a very decent person," said Hansei to his wife. "And a beautiful room we've got for her too, if she is not afraid of the old resident."

Walpurga was happy that the hardest part was over.

When Hansei had spoken with the stranger, the little pitch-man thought himself also entitled to be heard; and as a first token of his resolve, he cracked his whip so that it echoed in the valley and on the heights.

"Haven't I told you to be quiet?" cried the grandmother.

"She — she there is well again," replied the little pitch-man. "Isn't it true," said he, turning to Irma, "Isn't it true that the cracking don't hurt you?"

Irma said, that he was to lay no constraint upon himself; and growing bold, the little pitch-man asked:

"And what's your name?"

"Irmgard."

"Really? that was my wife's name, and if you approve, I'll marry another Irmgard, I've got a little house, and a goat; I am still in debt for the little house, but the goat is paid for. Say, will ye have me?"

"Don't make such jokes, Peter," cried Beate; she was however pleased that something jesting had been said.

The little pitch-man laughed aloud, and was well contented with himself. Yes, Hansei there, freehold peasant as he now indeed was, couldn't talk so with

any one. The little pitch-man was very talkative, and when he had nothing more to speak about, he gathered strawberries which grew by the way side, and which in these high regions only ripened late, and he offered them on a hazel leaf to Irma. Yes, Peter has good manners, he sees that in his sister's expression as she smiles at him.

The journey to the new home went on without adventure. When they came in sight of the place, and touched the boundary, the grandmother begged that they would stop. She alighted, and went into the wood, and kneeling down with her face on the ground, she exclaimed:

"Thanks be to God that I have thee again! Keep me for a long time well, and let me and mine have healthy days on thee, and receive me kindly when my last hour comes!"

She went back to the waggon and said: "Thank God, all of you together! now we are at home. See the house yonder with a large lime-tree, that's the farm where we are to live."

Gundel too alighted with the child, Irma alone remained in the waggon, all the others went the rest of the way on foot.

They passed through the village in the valley, from which there was nearly an hour's walk to the farm. As they entered the village, the little pitch-man cracked his whip loudly; he wished every one to see with what kindred, and with how much property, he was now travelling. They passed by a small house.

"I was born there," said the grandmother to Hansei.

"I'll take off my hat to the house," replied Hansei, and he did as he said.

At the inn, not far from the town hall and the church, the waggons were stopping which had gone on beforehand; and the people had gathered together to see the new freehold peasant and his belongings. The little pitch-man as master of the ceremonies, pointed out the burgomaster's wife to Walpurga. Walpurga went up to her, and Beate too was happy, for the mother of the burgomaster's wife was there, in whose house she had served as nurse maid, long ago, when she was still at school; she asked after the boy whom she had then taken care of. "He is dead," they said, "but there stands his son."

A stalwart lad was called, but he hadn't a word to say when Beate told him she had nursed his father when he was a little child.

Half the village stood round the new comers and chattered long.

Irma lay in the waggon here in the open market place, and the people to whom she had joined herself had forgotten her. The grandmother was the first who remembered her again, she came to her, and said:

"Forgive us for having forgotten you, but we shall be soon going on, and homewards."

Irma replied, that they must not trouble themselves about her; the grandmother did not quite understand what lay in Irma's tone.

Here on the high road in a covered peasant's waggon, amid the loud talking of the assembled crowds, a feeling of sadness had passed through her, that she had accepted the charity of others, she, once done such homage to, now so forgotten; but she quickly regained the strength of her nature; it was better thus, she thought, for then she was alone.

At length they drove on. Their road again lay up the mountain. The grandmother was very happy and greeted everything. The plum-trees stood so full of fruit, and the apple-trees on the new road, which she had seen planted in her youth, were now large and spreading, and bent under the weight of their rosy burden. The grandmother kept saying:

"I never thought it so far before, no, I meant to say, I thought it further — what am I saying? I could fancy the world turned topsyturvy. Children, I tell you, you will live to see great things, good things, beautiful things. Come, give me the child," cried she to Gundel, as she took Burgei in her arms; her countenance beaming with joy.

"Burgei, here thou'lt sing, and here I have sung, and here I have carried thy mother in my arms, as I now do thee. There! give that to the birds."

She had taken some bread out of her pocket, and had given the crumbs to the child to scatter to the birds on the way, and she herself kept throwing little pieces of bread to the right and left.

She spoke not a word more, but her lips moved silently.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

As they came towards the house, the white foal neighed a welcome.

"That's a good beginning," cried Hansei.

The mother put down the child on the ground, took her psalm-book out of the chest, and pressing the book to her breast with both her hands, she entered

the house before the others. Hansei stood by the stable door, took a piece of chalk out of his pocket, and wrote C. M. B., and the date of the year on it; then he too went into the house, his wife with Irma and the child following him.

The grandmother knocked thrice at the door of the dwelling room, then she entered, and placed the psalm-book open on the window-sill, so that the sun could shine on it. There was no table nor chair.

Hansei held out his hand to his wife in the room, and said:

“Good day, peasant!”

From that moment Walpurga was called the peasant, and never otherwise.

Irma was now shown her room. It had a view over the meadow and brook, and the adjacent wood. Irma looked round the room. There was nothing but a green Dutch oven, the walls were bare and she had nothing with her. In her father's house, and in the palace, there were chairs and tables, horses and carriages — and here? — Nothing follows the dead.

Irma knelt in the window, and looked over meadow and wood where the sun was now setting.

How was it yesterday — was it only yesterday? — when she had seen the sun set?

She had no fixed idea of anything. All swam confusedly before her. She held her hand to her brow, which was bound by the white handkerchief. A bird looked at her from the meadow, but when her eye rested on it, it flew away into the wood.

The bird has its nest, something said within her, and I . . . ?

Suddenly she drew herself up erect; Hansei came

upon the grass plot in front of Irma's window, he took the slip of the cherry-tree from his hat, and planted it in the ground.

The grandmother stood by and said:

"I trust that you may climb this tree with sound limbs, and gather cherries, and your children and grandchildren too."

There was much to do and to arrange in the home, and it easily happens in such disorder, that the dearest belongings are as much in each other's way as the closets and tables which are not yet in their right places; the best proof of the peacefulness of these people was that each worked into each other's hands with joy and willingness, and even with jesting and song.

Walpurga brought the best of her household stuff into Irma's room. Hansei did not interpose a word.

"Are you not solitary here?" asked Walpurga, when she had arranged everything so far as her haste permitted.

"Not at all. I can nowhere on earth be solitary enough. You have now a great deal to do, so don't trouble about me, I must also now begin to settle myself. I see how good you and your people are. Fate has led me happily."

"Oh! don't say such a thing as that! If you hadn't given us the gold, we could never have bought the farm; you are really on your own property."

"Say no more of it!" interrupted Irma, "never again! I never wish to hear anything of that gold."

Walpurga promised, and only said, that Irma must not be afraid if the old man who lived above her, sometimes talked loudly with himself, and made a

noise; that he was a blind old man, whom the children used very ill, but that he was not ill-natured and would do harm to no one. Walpurga offered at any rate for the first night to leave Gundel with Irma, but the latter wished to be alone.

"And you'll stay with us," said Walpurga timidly, "and you won't get such a bad thought into your head again — will you?"

"No, never again! but don't talk. Voices pain me, even yours. Good night! Leave me alone."

Irma sat by the window and looked out into the dark night.

Was it only one single day, since she had experienced so much? Suddenly she sprang up shudderingly, she saw the head of black Esther emerge out of the night, she heard her last cry, she saw her distorted face, and the wild black locks . . . her own hair rose on end . . . she pictured herself in the depth of the lake, lying there dead. . . .

She opened the window, a mild aromatic air breathed upon her, she drew in the freshness. She sat for some time at the open window, when suddenly she heard a burst of laughter above her.

"O, ho! I shall not do you the favor! I shall not die — I shall not die! Pooh, pooh! I will live for a hundred years, and even then I shall ask leave to go on living."

It was the old resident who was speaking above her. After a time he continued:

"I am not so stupid. I know that it is now night, and the new peasant and his wife, I will disturb them! I am Jochem, they call me Jochem, and whatever vexes people, that I do with assiduity. Ha, ha,

ha! I ought to have some amends made to me for not wanting any light. I won't give that up, even if I have to go to the king."

Irma started, on hearing the king appealed to over head.

"Yes, I'll go to the king, to the king, to the king!" cried the old man upstairs, as if he knew that this word struck daggers into Irma's heart.

The window above her was closed. A chair was removed, and the old man went to bed.

Irma still sat looking into the dark night. Not a star was in the sky, there was no light anywhere, and nothing was to be heard but the roaring of the mountain stream, and the rustling of the wood. The black night was like a deep abyss.

"Are you still awake?" asked a soft voice without. It was the grandmother's.

"I have served as a maid at the farm here," said she, "now forty years ago, and here I am now the mother of its mistress, and almost the first in the house. But you are always in my mind. I am always imagining what your heart must be feeling. Now I'll tell you something: Come out with me, and I'll take you where it will do you good. Come!"

Irma went out with the old woman into the dark night. It was a different guide to that of yesterday.

The old woman led her to the fountain; she had brought with her a vessel, and she gave it to her.

"Come, drink. Good cold water is the best thing. Water is a consoler to the body, it makes one cool and quiet, it bathes one's inside. I know too how it is when one has sorrow; one feels as if there was a fire within."

Irma drank of the mountain water. It was like a soothing dew diffused through her whole frame.

The mother accompanied her back again to her room, and said:

"You have still on the linen you wore in the palace. You'll see, you'll never get rid of the remembrance of that place till you have burned it all."

The old woman urged her opinion, and Irma was as obedient as a little child; she put on the coarse linen which the mother quickly fetched, and then she brought light and wood and burned the others in the open fire. She compelled Irma even to cut off her long nails, and throw them in the fire. Then Beate quickly left, and returned with Irma's riding habit.

"You must have received a shot some day, for here are bullets," said she, spreading out the long blue garment.

A smile passed over Irma's face; she felt the leaden bullets, which were sown in the bottom of her habit, to regulate its fall in riding.

But Beate had brought something good with her, and this was a doeskin.

"My Hansei sends this to you," she said. "He thinks you may be perhaps accustomed to have something soft for your feet. He shot this doe himself."

Irma felt the goodheartedness of the man, who showed such consideration for one so unknown and mysterious.

The grandmother sat by Irma's bed till she fell asleep; then she breathed thrice on the sleeper and left the room.

It was far in the night when Irma woke.

"To the king! to the king! to the king!" was three

times loudly called out. Had she called it out herself, or the man up-stairs? Irma clasped her brow, and felt the bandage. Was it seaweed that had fastened itself round her? Was she lying alive deep within the water? Only by degrees did all that had happened become distinct to her.

For the first time since her terrible experiences, she wept silently and solitarily in the night.

It was the next evening before Irma fully awoke. She felt for her forehead, and a damp cloth had been bound round it. For almost a whole night and a whole day, had Irma slept. The grandmother was sitting by her bedside.

"You have a strong nature," said the old woman; "and it has helped you. It is over now."

Irma rose; she felt herself strong. Conducted by the grandmother, she went to the dwelling-house.

"Thank God that you are well again," said Walpurga, who was standing here with her husband; and Hansei said too: "Yes, that is good."

Irma thanked them, and looked up at the gable of the house. What were the words written there, saying to her?

"The house has a good word written on it, hasn't it?" said Hansei.

Irma started. She read on the gable of the house the inscription:

"Eat and drink,
On God oft think,
Thine honour strictly save;
Of all thou'st got,
Thou takest not
More than a sheet to the grave."

S I X T H B O O K.

FIRST CHAPTER.

By Irma's flight the life of the lacquey Baum was suddenly void. He came back to the place where Irma was to have waited for him, and from which she had disappeared; he gazed into the distance and saw nothing. A dog which has to follow the track of his master, is better at his task; instinct shows him the course taken, but man has to reflect.

Was this a flight? Whither? Why? What is the duty of a subordinate? Ought he to pursue her who had sent him back? She had openly and honestly sent back the dog, but the servant is imposed upon — he is a human being for that very end.

"Shame upon you, Countess, thus to make a fool of a poor servant who is obliged to obey." So spoke Baum to himself. He felt that for the first time he must make the great experiment of being a reasoning servant. Perhaps there was some appointment for this evening in the letters which he had brought with him. They might be at the chase. They might meet in the wood. They couldn't openly come to Wildenort. The mourning had been too short for that; and they wouldn't have let the servant know this. But why not? He would gladly have kept their secret.

But perhaps the countess had escaped.

Wherefore? Whither?

So much confidence had been bestowed upon him — the gentleman of the chamber had said to him: "You are always to remain about the countess, always; do you understand? and you are to bring her back to the court." Had they then a presentiment that she would escape? Why had they given him only half confidence?

"I am innocent!" exclaimed Baum. But what use is it to be innocent? — one must use one's judgment.

Baum had had good instructions from his master, the head chamberlain of Baroness Steigeneck. "A good servant," the latter had said to him, "ought always to have two things with him — a sharp knife, and a well-going watch. If anything happens to disconcert you, take out your watch, count ten seconds, and then reflect what's to be done."

It's a good doctrine, but like many other good doctrines, the evil of it is, that in the midst of the confusion one doesn't remember it.

Baum rode back to the castle; perhaps the countess had ridden home some other way, or perhaps her maid knew whither she had intended to ride. He went to the maid.

"Is your mistress here?"

"No — she rode out with you."

"Do you know where she intended going?"

"She has left you? Oh, God! now she will carry it out!"

"What do you mean?"

"I have already told the count, the king's aide-de-camp, that I feared she would kill herself. I believe she has either poison with her, or a dagger — she will kill herself!"

"If she'd intended to kill herself either with poison or a dagger, she might have done that already in her room," replied Baum.

"Yes, yes. Only last night she called out in her dream: 'Deep into the lake!' Oh, gracious heaven! my good beautiful countess is dead! Oh, unhappy being that I am — what will become of me?"

Baum endeavoured to quiet the distressed woman, and inquired if the countess had not left any papers anywhere.

The writing-table stood open, and some scattered papers lay on it; they found the letter addressed to the queen. Baum wanted to take possession of it, but the maid held it fast. She would not suffer a stranger to investigate the secrets of her mistress.

Suddenly, in the midst of the contest, Baum drew out his watch. He had now remembered the reckoning of the ten seconds; he looked fixedly at the dial-plate; and, having counted ten, he nodded — for he had recovered his composure and presence of mind.

Good, — the maid should deliver the letter; nothing was to be gained and nothing lost by that, but he himself would show that he deserved the higher confidence. His task was to set about inquiries, and perhaps he would still save her.

As the maid turned away, and put the letter quickly in her pocket, he saw another letter addressed "To the Friend." He quickly perceived that this was of far more value, and he put it into his own pocket. That friend could be but one, and he knew who that was. The maid had heard the crackling of the paper, and desired to have the letter back. Baum speedily left the room, and summoned the servants of the house. The

maid followed him; he now quickly turned from the assailed to the assailant. He demanded the letter to the queen, that he might unseal it, and thus obtain some clue to the countess's escape, and he made the servant responsible for all consequences. She fled from him, and he did not carry out his plan, for he did not know whether he ought to unseal the letter, and at any rate he had undisputed possession of the more important one to the king. He ordered the groom to saddle another horse and to ride with him.

The rosy evening was already lighting up the windows of the castle when they both rode forth. But whither?

A labourer on the road was questioned — he had seen nothing of the countess. The shepherd was driving his sheep home, and they both rode up to him; the shepherd nodded to the inquiry as to whether he had seen the countess, but they could not hear him for the loud bleating of the sheep. Baum alighted, and heard that the countess had ridden at full gallop along the way to the Gamsbühel. "She sits firmly, she can ride well," said the shepherd praisingly.

They had now found a clue to her. They both galloped along the road. When they had reached the piece of drained mountain-land, they heard a horse neighing. They rode up to it. There stood Irna's riding-horse, grazing quietly, but thick foam lay on its bridle and girth.

"The countess is thrown — who knows where she may be lying fainting?" said Baum. He still wished to be cautious, and not to communicate everything overhastily to the groom.

They now searched round about and called aloud; but they found nothing, and received no answer. Baum discovered the horse's track, going and returning. They took Irma's horse with them, but they did not go higher up the mountain; for it was necessary to observe accurately where the horse's track led. It was only Baum's keen eye which could discover the hoof-prints in the twilight.

"If we only had the dog with us — he knows her. Why didn't you bring the dog with you?" he asked angrily.

"You never told me to do so."

"Ride back and fetch him! No, stay; I can't be alone."

They reached the Gamsbühel.

"Let us go aside into the wood," cried Baum.

His good knife now found its use; he cut brush-wood, bound it together for a torch, kindled it, and lighted all around him. He found the track. The horse had here turned round; there were the prints here too of a woman's foot going in an opposite direction for some paces, and then he lost the track.

"She must be here," said Baum; "she's gone down into the wood here. I know every path; go you to the left with the two horses, and I will go to the right with one. But don't go further off than you can hear my voice."

They searched and called through the gloomy wood, but they found nothing. At last they met again. A stag shot past them. Could it but have spoken, it would have told them where Irma had startled it from its lair — a good hour's walk from where they then were.

"If you find her, you'll get a good reward," said Baum to the groom. He spoke to another as he thought that his royal master would speak to him. Almost the whole night they wandered laboriously through the forest, till at length they were obliged to lie down and wait for the day; there was no longer any path by which to lead the horses.

The day had already long dawned when the two men opened their eyes. The lake was sparkling in the distance, and even up here the sound of the music was wafted, and the rocks where they stood sent back a strong echo of the guns that were fired.

Baum took the pistols from the saddle-pockets, and fired them off one after another; then he listened, holding his breath. Irma might perhaps be somewhere here; she would hear the shots and would give a sign. But not a sound was heard.

They now found a forest-road which led down to the lake. They came to the shore. There lay the mirror-like lake, stretching away for miles; who knows what it hides within its depths? Yonder in the distance there was a boat with people and animals on board. The boat was drawing to shore. Baum and his companion turned to the other side, where there were scattered peasant cottages and fishermen's huts; man and horse were wearied out, they needed refreshment. Baum asked every one he met, whether they had seen a lady in a blue riding-habit and a hat with a feather; but there was no trace anywhere.

"Stay," said an old man, who was cutting osiers by the lake.

"Where? when?"

"Yonder in the inn there. It's nigh upon a year now, since she lived there for a few weeks."

Baum cursed the simple peasant people.

Happily he here met a gendarme. He told him who he was, and what he was looking for, he sent the groom back to Wildenort with the lady's saddle, put his own saddle on Pluto, and rode along the edge of the lake with the officer. Presently on a rock by the shore they saw a figure holding on high a hat with a feather. They galloped quickly in that direction. Baum was so startled that he lost his stirrup — he recognised his brother Thomas.

Suppose the countess had been robbed and murdered!

The gendarme knew the wild fellow. Thomas looked and grinned at them both; his hair was wet, and his clothes were dripping.

"What are you doing here?" cried the gendarme.
"What have you got there?"

"That's no concern of yours," answered Thomas; and his teeth chattered.

Baum took out a bottle of brandy and held it to the shivering man, and Thomas took a huge draught; then, with a mixture of rage and lamentation, he told them how the loved one of the king had lost her way yesterday night, and had been to them in the root hut; and how she had beguiled his sister to drown herself in the lake with her, and that he had come too late; that he had seen something floating in the water and had sprung in to save her, but had found nothing but the hat.

The gendarme would not believe this story, and he would have arrested Thomas forthwith. Baum, how

ever, whispered to him that he was certain that the lady had drowned herself, and that there was no murder in the matter. He did not wish to have his brother arrested, for a feeling of pity was roused within him, and he said to Thomas:

"Look here; we'll make an exchange. There, I'll give you my bottle, there's still a good deal in it, and you give me the hat."

"No, no; I know whom the hat belongs to, it's worth a lot, and I'll take it to the king!

"If he has his love no more,
He still has got her hat,
And if the old love's in the lake,
A new's as good as that! Hurra!"

sang Thomas stammeringly, throwing the hat in the air and catching it again.

The gendarme would have knocked him down, but Baum restrained him; he went up to Thomas and laid his hand on his shoulder. Thomas started; he grew suddenly quiet and looked timidly at Baum. Baum spoke very condescendingly with him, and the latter kept staring at him with his mouth open, as if he were trying to recollect something which he could not say; this voice, this hand on his shoulder, made quite another man of him; and the wild murderous fellow wept.

"Will you give me the hat for a gold piece, or will you have it taken from you by force? You see we are two, and we can master you," said Baum.

Without answering a word, Thomas held out the hat; and when Baum gave him the gold piece, Thomas could not close his hand — he looked confused, now on the gold piece, now on the giver.

Baum spoke to him earnestly, and told him that if he had a mother he should give her some of the money.

"A mother!" stammered Thomas, looking at Baum with a glassy eye. "A mother!" he repeated; some remembrance seemed awakened in him.

The gendarme admired the liberality of the court lacquey, and looked upon him as a great man.

Thomas now informed him again that Irma had been with them in the hut the night before, and that his mother knew still more about her, for she had been alone with her. The two men asked to speak with the mother, and Thomas led them up the mountain to the hut.

On the way, the gendarme told the lacquey Thomas' family history, and added: "Don't you see, the man is a brawler, and an often convicted poacher; I have before now counselled him to emigrate to America, for there he can have enough. And he has a brother in America — a twin brother — but he must be a thoroughly bad man if he's not dead. He has never written a word to his mother or his brother, and has never sent home as much as you could put in your eye; but to be sure that's how men become in America — many have gone there from my part, and they're all good for nothing and think only of themselves."

Baum smiled at the narrator; he required all his self-possession, and scarcely spoke a word; he had to prepare himself for meeting his mother, and it was annoying that she was now involved in this matter — he wanted his thoughts for other things.

The gendarme endeavoured to shorten the way, and he was an adept in relating stories of criminals; only

these stories have this unpleasant accompaniment — that one ought to have clean hands oneself when one hears them. Baum nodded to him graciously; he must not betray by look or manner that the degraded man who walked in front of them concerned him in the least. The gendarme related how once a murderer, whom he had helped to take, had bitten his finger; and he showed the scar.

At last Baum rid himself of these horrible stories; he asked the gendarme in what regiment he had been, and he asked it as graciously as if he was going the next minute to draw an order out of his pocket and decorate the man. There was nothing better now than to tell of his former military life. The gendarme related stories and laughed, and Baum laughed too — he was obliged to laugh. Thomas, who was in front, looked round and grinned, and then went on. They reached the hut, no one was there — the old Zenza had disappeared.

"She is looking of course too for Esther," said Thomas.

"And what's become of black Esther?" asked the gendarme.

"Black Esther?" repeated Thomas. "Ha! ha! the lake will wash her white now. If any one would pay me well for it, I'd jump into the lake too."

He threw himself down on the sack of leaves, and silently looked at his hands with which he had ill-treated Esther in the forest during the preceding night; then he laid his head back and fell into a heavy sleep. It was not possible to get a word out of him. Baum and the gendarme rode away: they wished again to go to the lake that they might find further traces and give

orders everywhere. They came out of the wood at the high road, and here it was that they met the covered waggon.

They rode along the lake again at a quiet pace; a large red cow was in front of the two horsemen, eating now and then, and looking across the lake. Suddenly, when it came to a thicket, it started, turned round, and ran back so quickly that it almost came in contact with Baum's horse.

"The cow has shied at something — there is something lying there," said Baum alighting quickly. His dyed hair rose on end, for he expected at the next moment to see Irma's body. And truly he found something. There lay Irma's torn shoes, he knew them; here was a track of blood, and the grass was trampled down, as if a human form had lain and moved there.

Baum's hand trembled as he took up the shoes, and it trembled still more as he gathered a little flower — it was a simple flower — the little alchemilla, the best mountain fodder; and in the corolla of the flower, there were drops of blood still almost moist.

If she had drowned herself, whence this blood? whence the shoes? and the shoes so far from the place where Thomas had found the hat? And there were here so many footprints of large shoes? If Irma after all had been murdered? If his brother . . .

"She is dead — that's the main matter," said Baum consolingly to himself, "and I have the tokens; what's the use then of bringing another man into misfortune?"

He added the little blood-besprinkled plant to the letter, which was addressed "To the Friend."

He went with the gendarme into the inn on the landing-place, where early in the day Walpurga and her people had halted.

The gendarme here inquired again respecting the lady in the blue habit.

The hostess's manner betrayed something. Was this perhaps the crazy woman who had been to-day with the travellers? They had run hither and thither so much, and had carried bundles of clothes, and the stranger had looked so oddly.

"You know somewhat," said the gendarme, looking fixedly into the face of the hostess. "Tell it!"

"I know nothing," said the hostess. "Have I said a word? what do you want with me?"

All the fear entertained by the peasantry, of being obliged to appear before a court of justice to bear witness, was strong in the hostess, and she withheld herself rigidly from giving vent to a single word.

Baum perceived that he had not done well in taking the gendarme with him, for his presence alarmed people when they had anything to communicate; he therefore sent him away, that he might make further inquiries independently.

Baum stood before a looking-glass combing and brushing his dyed hair, which was to-day very refractory. For the first time in his life he was profoundly modest; he felt he was not at all the right man to investigate such an affair, and he had too already delayed so long that others would take away any advantage which was to be drawn from Irma's death; he determined to hasten back to the palace, for there were people enough there who could better bring the matter to an end.

He endeavoured alone to sound the hostess, who still seemed to him to know something; but the hostess was reserved to him also, for she knew of his acquaintance with the gendarme, and it was of no avail that, pointing to his buttons, he announced himself as a royal lacquey.

Suddenly he remembered that on the lake here, Walpurga lived; it was scarcely a year since he had travelled here with Doctor Sixtus. Irma had always been the friend of Walpurga, she had perhaps now concealed herself with her — such overstrained people are capable of anything.

The large boat still lay in front of the inn. Baum went with his horse on board, and ordered them to set sail at once; he consented however that a forest labourer, who arrived with a great barrowful of hay, gathered from the most dangerous points, should cross over in the boat with him. They put off. Baum lay down on the wild hay, feeling thoroughly worn out.

He now inquired of the sailors whether they had seen anything of a drowned person. He learnt that in the morning a human head with long hair had been seen to rise from the water. It was probably that of a woman.

Baum started up suddenly, and looked confusedly over the sparkling surface of the lake.

"If the gentleman will wait," said the older sailor to Baum, "after three days, the lake will give up its dead."

Baum wanted to hear no more; he only felt in his pocket for the paper with the blood-besprinkled flower; he stretched himself still more comfortably on the hay

and fell asleep, and he did not wake till the great boat drew to land.

It was really no longer necessary to go in search of Walpurga; still he went — he wanted to show that he had tried all ways and means. He reached the shore cottage and knocked at the door; no one answered. He looked through the window, two large cat's eyes stared at him, the cat was sitting on the shelf. It was all that remained there; the room looked as if it had been robbed, there was nowhere a chair or a table. As if he were enchanted or in a dream, he went back again through the garden.

The magpie was chattering on the bare cherry-tree, but not a human being was to be seen. At last a man went by, and Baum recognized him as the tailor Schneck.

"Hie! man!" he called out, "where are Hansei and Walpurga?"

"They're over the mountains; they've gone away, and have bought a large farm, they call it the freehold, out yonder on the boundary."

The tailor Schneck was very talkative, and wanted to know whether the gentleman was bringing anything from the king and the queen. But Baum was laconic; he mounted his horse and rode away straight to the summer palace.

It was a long toilsome ride; he often felt for the hat and the shoes of the countess, to convince himself that he still had these treasures in his possession.

In the midst of all his agitation and haste, he had still composure and calmness enough to think, how through this event he was stepping on a springboard, from which he might bound into a higher position.

Henceforth he was the confidant of the king, he alone could say what had happened and how it had happened. He looked at his hand which the king would press in gratitude; he even imagined the king had already pressed it. It could not fail him, the gentleman of the chamber was weak with age — he would step into his place. It would indeed be better if he could have said that Irma had been murdered — the gendarme, like a blood-hound, had found a clue there — but no, that wouldn't do; it was his brother, though it would even be better for him to be fed behind bolts and bars till he died. No — Baum would not be so hard as that. He made the good resolve that when he became the gentleman of the chamber he would do many good things; aye, to his mother and to his brother — his sister was dead, and that was sad; he would certainly do all this if he got on, and the king gave him a nice bit of money and a good annuity for life. Baum was so daring as to ask God to help him in obtaining his wish, promising to do good with it.

And as he thus rode on through the night, now and then falling asleep — for it was the second night he had spent in such unrest — every thing passed in confusion through his mind.

At the last halting place he left his horse, and took a post-chaise.

It was early in the morning when Baum arrived at the summer palace. He was only awoke with difficulty, and it was long before he recovered himself and recollected where he was, and what he had with him.

The horses were being put to in the royal carriages, and the most beautiful riding horses were being brought

out from the stables. Baum scarcely heard the welcome from his comrades and the grooms.

He went into the palace, up the steps; his knees felt, as if they must break, so wearied was he. He entered the king's ante-chamber. The gentleman of the chamber took the pinch of snuff which he had between his fingers, and held out his hand to Baum. Baum sank down on a chair, and expressed his wish to be at once announced to his majesty.

"I can't yet, — must wait," answered the gentleman of the chamber.

Baum kept himself awake by main force, sitting upright on the chair.

SECOND CHAPTER.

THE king was already early in his cabinet. He never gave way to effeminate habits, and none surpassed him at court in his power of overcoming fatigue. From year's end to year's end, he took every morning a cold bath, and felt himself in consequence newly invigorated for work and society. He accustomed himself to no easy attire, and he left his bath-room fully dressed for the day.

This morning he entered his cabinet in hunting costume; he had still a good deal of business to despatch.

This bureau was situated in the central building, in the so-called electoral tower. It was a large, lofty apartment, and at the same time very comfortable. Lying about in the room were books, military maps, and some favourite pieces of sculpture, partly antiques,

which he had acquired while prince, on his travels, and many of them fine copies. There was a letter weight, formed out of a pyramid of leaden bullets from the battle field of Leipzig. The oak furniture was in the Renaissance style. In the middle of the room stood the large writing-table, on which every convenience was studiously arranged; a single water-colour picture, representing the queen as a bride, was on the right of his chair.

The king came in, pressed a bell, which stood on the writing-table, and the privy counsellor entered the apartment.

He handed several papers in succession to the king, his majesty glanced quickly over them, and signed them hastily. The privy counsellor gave in a report respecting affairs in the home department. The king meanwhile walked up and down his cabinet. Suddenly he exclaimed:

"What is that?"

In the adjoining room, he heard a sound of moving and lifting and of scraping footsteps, as if a coffin were being carried away. He pressed his bell, and as if in answer to the pressure, his door opened, and the gentleman of the chamber appeared.

"What insufferable noise is this in the gallery?"

"Your Majesty gave orders that the large picture was to be removed."

The king remembered that he had yesterday given the order.

Long as he had been accustomed to the picture, he had felt all at once an aversion to it; it represented life size, the scene in which king Belshazzar is sitting on his throne, with his courtiers round him, and a hand

out of the clouds is writing *Mene, Tekel*, on the wall. The king had ordered that the picture should be removed and consigned to the public gallery.

"It has been done awkwardly," said the king; "it was time to do it when I was at the chase."

The gentleman of the chamber, who had been standing upright there, trembled all over when he heard this, his hands hung by his side, his head bent. He dragged himself with difficulty to the opposite door, and left the room. All was still at once; the picture was placed on the ground without a sound, and the servants retired.

The gentleman of the chamber went into the ante-room from the other side, sat down in an armchair, took out a pinch of snuff, but forgot to put it to his nose; it was only when Baum entered, that he took it.

He sat opposite Baum in silence; he shook his head now and then, and looked at his large armchair. Yes, he 'll soon be sitting here, he thought, and thou'lt be dismissed.

The privy counsellor passed through the ante-room; the old gentleman of the chamber forgot to bring him his hat quickly. Baum did it in his stead. Baum was fresh again; now was not the time to be weary; the great trump must be played out.

The bell in the cabinet sounded again. "Is any one else in the ante-room?" inquired the king of the gentleman of the chamber.

"Yes, your Majesty, the lacquey Baum."

"Let him come in."

Baum was now conscious of his high position. The king had not told him to inform the gentleman in waiting, he had called out: "let him come in" — he

would confer with him without the interference of another; his high post of confidence was already obtained.

The old gravely submissive manner of Baum was to-day peculiarly solemn.

"Have you any message?" inquired the king.

"No, your Majesty."

"What have you there?"

"Your Majesty," replied Baum, placing his bundle on a chair, and untying the knots of the wrapper, "your Majesty! I found this hat of the Countess von Wildenort in the lake, and these shoes on the shore among the willows."

The king extended his hand towards the tokens brought, and then drew it back, and pressed it to his heart. He looked at Baum with a fixed and staring gaze.

"And what does it all mean?" he asked, raising his hand to his head, and adjusting his hair, which stood on end.

"Your Majesty," continued Baum, he himself trembled when he saw the king so agitated, "your Majesty, the gracious countess wore these articles of dress, when she rode out and ran away from me —"

"Ran away? And —"

Baum laid his hand on his watch; he could not see the seconds, but he could count them in thought, and he softly said:

"The gracious countess drowned herself in the lake last night, — no, the night before last. Sailors saw the body of a female emerging and sinking, and tomorrow, which is the third day, the lake will give her up —"

The king signed with his hand — it was enough, — and the hand trembled; he grasped hold of the back of a chair, and fixed his eyes on the hat and shoes.

Baum looked down, he felt how the king was now staring at him, and he did not raise his eyes; he fixed them on the ground, which seemed to be rising, and raising the lacquey up to the throne, beside the king, as his confidant. Baum modestly bent his head lower; he heard the king walking up and down the room, he did not look up; a downcast air betokens, he thought, perfect obedience and unqualified devotion. The king paused before him.

“How do you know that it was suicide?” . . .

“I do not know. If your Majesty pleases, the countess was drowned —”

“I? How?”

“Your Majesty, I crave submissively — may I tell everything?”

“You must —”

The king was speaking condescendingly to him — as he did only with those most in his confidence. Collecting all his energy, Baum now said:

“Your Majesty, I found the shoes myself, but I had the hat from a man, from whom anything may be expected . . . the gendarme is of opinion . . . and it might perhaps be good for the man . . . to pardon him after a year and send him to America . . . a brother of his . . . is said to be . . . there . . .”

“You speak confusedly!”

Baum regained his composure.

“Some poacher may have murdered her. The worst is that she sent a letter to her majesty the Queen —”

"To the Queen? Where is it? Give it to me!"

"I have it not. The maid snatched it from me."

The king sat down.

For a long while, nothing was heard but the quick ticking of the clock which stood on the writing-table.

Presently the king rose, and went up and down the room; he turned round and approached Baum. It felt to him as if it were the judgment hour, the doom for life and death. Baum put his hand into his neckerchief as if to loosen it — a sword seemed passing through him.

"Do you know what was in the letter to the queen?"

"No, your Majesty."

"Was the letter sealed?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"And have you nothing else?"

"Yes, your Majesty; I have this also. I snatched this almost by force from the maid. And here, your Majesty, here is the thing more; there was a pool of blood by the sh^oo^r, and this little plant is besprinkled with it."

A heart-rending cry of grief burst from the king. He went with the letter and the plant into an adjoining room.

Baum stood still and waited.

In the next room the king sat reading with tearful eyes.

"She loved me so, and she was so beautiful and stately," he said to himself, with pale trembling lips. The whole charm of her appearance, of her voice, of her gait passed before him, and was it all now dead?

The king looked at his hand, which she had so

readily, so heartily kissed. He took up the letter again, and read over the words, "To the Friend," and he knew not how it was — but when he came to himself again, he lay on the floor by the chair.

What was to be done?

He recollected that the lacquey was waiting in the cabinet. The king felt deeply humbled; must he have a man like this as his confidant? But had not men of all kinds been long conversant with his sin? They knew it, only they were silent. A thousand eyes were looking at him, and a thousand lips were talking of him — and all promulgated the terrible fact. The king looked round confused, he could scarcely support himself. And of all the thousands who had laid the hand of allegiance on him, and whose gaze was directed towards him, how heavily did the hand and the gaze of one weigh upon him — and her lips, what did they say? How was he now to approach the queen? Did she but know his deep heartfelt ^{TO} contrition, she would fall weeping on his breast, for she ²⁰ was divinely good. She was divinely good, and what had he done to her? . . .

He would send the queen his friend's last words; he would write underneath them; he would place repentingly in her hands all his thoughts and feelings. . .

"It is better not to act upon the first impulse," he said consolingly to himself at last, and when he stood up, the consciousness of his strength returned. "One must accomplish the most difficult duty, even that of repentance, without laying aside one's dignity."

The king stood before the large looking-glass; he had forgotten that he was in his hunting-dress, and he

started at the sight of himself as though he were a stranger.

His face was pale, his eyes red. He had wept for his friend, and now it was enough. What it takes some, months and years to get over, great natures effect and achieve in a few minutes; the years of their life become unlimited ages — and as if through the air the words “the kiss of eternity” were borne, and the remembrance of that day in the atelier hovered before him, and of the ball, and . . .

“It was given to thee to live the highest life of love, and then to compel death to take thee — I cannot do so, I do not live for myself alone!” he burst forth, and in the midst of his grief, it seemed to him as if a new source of life were opened within him.

“And this thou hast effected —” mused he of the dead — “thou wilt ever abide within me with all that is good; without thee — I would confess it to God, were I now to appear before him — without thee, I should never have discovered the deepest springs of my being. If I only knew of any deed which could be a memorial of thy life . . .”

The king again remembered that a lacquey was waiting in his cabinet. It was painful to him that he had not even an hour to himself to calm his feelings, and the thought for the first time passed through his mind: He who has many to command in their service to him, is also bound to many by duty; they live out their own life beyond the hour and act of their service.

Something of Irma's last words hovered over him like a misty exhalation. He returned to his cabinet.

Baum was still standing in the same place as silently and quietly as a chair or table.

"When did you start?" asked the king. Baum told the facts in detail.

"You will be weary," said the king.

"Yes, your Majesty."

"Well, now rest yourself, and whatever else you have to tell, tell only to me, you understand?"

"Certainly, your Majesty. I thank you humbly."

The king had drawn a ring with a large emerald from his finger, he made the gem play and glitter in the sunlight, and turned it to this side and that. Baum thought the king was going to give him this ring as a token of favour. But he put the ring on again, and asked:

"Are you married?"

"I was so, your Majesty."

"Have you children?"

"One son, your Majesty."

"Well. Hold yourself ready, I shall soon have further orders for you."

Baum went out. He called out graciously to the gentleman of the chamber as he entered the ante-room: "Pray don't rise!" and walked quickly away. No one need see what was to be read in every line of his face — the king had spoken familiarly with him, he had inquired after his family; he was the confidant of the king, and the highest post stood before him.

He went to his abode in the side wing of the palace.

The king was alone. Nothing was near him, but the hat and shoes of Irma. He sat looking fixedly at them. It was a romance — thus to bring to the lover

the shoes and hat of his beloved one — it was a song to sing in the twilight . . . The thoughts rose in his mind, and yet all was confusion in his brain. He took the hat and shoes — his hand trembled — he locked up the tokens of death in his writing-table.

The feather on the hat broke as he shut the drawer.

A light was burning on the writing-table. The king held his cigar to it, and he started as his eye fell on the watercolour painting of the queen that stood there. He smoked hastily.

It was not till some time afterwards that the king rang and ordered the lord steward to be called, and desired that no one else should be admitted.

THIRD CHAPTER.

WHEN the lord steward entered, the king had recovered his self-possession, and was perfectly certain of the mode of proceeding to which he intended to adhere.

"Have you already heard of the terrible event?"

"Yes, your Majesty; the countess' maid is arrived; her mistress is drowned in the lake."

"And?" asked the king, as the lord steward paused.

"And it is added that the countess neither saw nor spoke to any one after her father's death. She has however written some words to her Majesty the queen, with the express order that the physician should deliver them to her."

"And has that been done, without communicating with me previously?"

The lord steward hesitated.

"Well, I know —" continued the king. "Is all ready for the chase?"

"At your Majesty's pleasure. The hunting party has been waiting for an hour."

"I am coming," said the king. "Send Sixtus, our court physician to the lake. He shall take the lacquey Baum with him, who has some knowledge of the affair. Let a notary also go with him; and let him take care that the body, when found, is suitably interred. I know that you will arrange all this carefully and independently."

The king laid especial emphasis on the last word. All was to take place properly, without any appearance of his especial participation in it.

The lord steward bowed.

The king knit his eyebrows, as if trying to remember something he had forgotten.

"One thing more," he said hastily, "go to the poor countess' brother, and tell him the matter as carefully as you can, and if he wants leave of absence, he may have it for an indefinite time."

The king went through the ante-room, down the steps; he had bid the queen adieu the evening before, for she was ordered quiet in the early autumn mornings.

The large hunting party in the palace yard greeted the king, and he returned it graciously. As if by word of command, the cloths were removed with one simultaneous movement from the various carriage horses.

"Colonel Bronnen," exclaimed the king, "come and sit with me."

Respectfully acknowledging the compliment, Bronnen went to the king's carriage. The gentlemen

of the hunting party looked amazed at Bronnen, and repaired to the carriages awaiting them.

Bronnen had bowed respectfully — it was the greatest honour of the day — but there was a struggle at his heart. Had the king any idea that he felt himself an avenger in the stead of the old Eberhard, and was wrestling with himself whether he must accept this heritage of vengeance? — He started, as he involuntarily touched the *couteau-de-chasse* at his side. Was there to be a tragedy in the royal carriage, such as history cannot tell of? Had Irma informed the king of his rejected suit, and was he now going to receive the alms of sympathy?

The party drove away into the country. The king sat for some time silent. At last he said:

"You were a true friend to her too, and she valued and esteemed you as she did few, aye, as she did no one else, and she always wished that we should be more closely united."

Bronnen drew a deep breath. There was no occasion for him to make any reply. The king offered him his cigar-case.

"Ah, you don't smoke," he said.

There was another long pause, till the king inquired:

"How long have you known the Countess Irma?"

"From her childhood. She was the friend of my cousin Emmy, who was with her in the convent."

"It is a comfort to me to be able to speak to you of my friend. You knew her character, that it was so grand, almost supernaturally grand. Allow me to inherit her friendship."

"Your Majesty —" replied Bronnen with con-

strained calmness, for his heart was boiling with rage against the man who had ruined this noble nature, and had driven it to destruction, but the habit of military discipline ruled him.

"Ah, dearest Bronnen," continued the king, "no death has ever affected me so much as this. Has she ever spoken of death to you? She hated it. And now, when I look beyond — there all is again animate, all is still alive. The whole world ought to stand still for a moment, when a noble heart ceases to beat. What are we?"

"Each is only a part of the world, a small, limited part. All around us has its due sphere of development and right, we are lords over nothing but over ourselves, and how rarely are we even this?"

The king looked at Bronnen with astonishment. Each had his sphere of right. — What did he mean by it?

Quickly calm again, the king replied:

"It is just so that she would have spoken. I can imagine, how much you both sympathized with each other. If I rightly understand you, you consider suicide as the extreme of crime?"

"If that which is most contrary to nature is to be called the extreme of crime, — certainly. Every being endeavours in accordance with nature to preserve its existence. Last winter I had a conversation, never to be forgotten, with the old Count Eberhard on this very subject."

"Oh really, then you knew him too. Was he truly a man of such importance?"

"He was a man of the grandest partiality in his

judgment of things. Perhaps greatness must always be partial."

"When did you speak with Countess Irma for the last time?"

"After her father's death, when she had shut herself up in impenetrable darkness. I spoke to her, but I saw her not, and she gave me her hand. I think I am the last man to whom she held out her hand."

"Then let me take hold of this hand," exclaimed the king.

He held Bronnen's hand for some time, till the latter began:

"Your Majesty, confession for confession: I loved Irma."

After these short and curtly expressed words, he paused. The king drew his hand quickly away.

"I see," continued Bronnen collecting his strength. "I acknowledge gratefully the countess' noble heart — she has mentioned nothing of my suit. She honourably declined my affection, because she could not return it."

"She? my dear Bronnen . . ." cried the king in a tone of painful agitation, and quickly there passed before his mind a picture of the happy life, which Irma might have enjoyed in union with this man. "Poor friend," he repeated with fervent expressiveness.

"Yes, your Majesty, I have a right to mourn with you, and it seems as if her strong, widely-working mind had still effected this, in your Majesty having now called me to your side."

"I never surmised it. Had I done so, I would not have imposed this pain upon you."

"And I thank your Majesty that I am permitted to be the companion of your sorrow; and since I am the

companion of it, I can perhaps give you comfort, so far as another can. Since your Majesty stands before me in unveiled truth, I must also be true in everything."

For a long time the king did not speak. Clearly and purely as Bronnen had opened his innermost heart to him, the immediate feeling which these communications awakened in the king, was a deep sense of jealousy, that another had ventured to cast an eye upon Irma, aye, actually to woo her; she seemed to him in consequence no longer his own, since another had stretched out his hand towards her.

Bronnen expected some reply from the king. He could not understand what this silence signified. Did the king repent that he had been so open, and was he offended that another should place himself on an equality with him and answer him with openness? The consciousness of royalty is detrimental to pure human feeling, and it perhaps never happens that a prince feels himself merely a human being. Bronnen too had a sense of annoyance, which increased the longer the king was silent and looked aside. He could bear the silence at length no more, and breaking through the barriers of etiquette, which here could be no longer in force, he said:

"I think few men would be so great-minded as to conceal a triumph they had obtained."

He was prepared when he uttered these words, for the king, who would of course perceive that they had another allusion, suddenly to turn round, and cast an annihilating reply at him. He composed himself in defiance. He to whom he had opened his innermost

soul, was not to behave as if nothing had happened; he must answer.

The king was still silent.

Bronnen continued tremblingly: "Is not your Majesty also of my opinion?"

The king turned round.

"You are my friend. I thank you and I thank her. When we reach Wolfswinkel, you shall receive the highest testimony of my confidence."

"I believe I have yet something which I ought to communicate to your Majesty."

"Let me hear it."

"I think I have a clue to the connexion of the last sad events. In the election of the deputies, which took place in the last few days, some friends in the mountains thought of me. They knew that I am sincerely devoted to my constitutional king."

The king's features contracted for a moment, and Bronnen continued in a calm tone:

"I have however explained to the electors that I can never accept an election which would drive me to the side of the opposition, and there I should have to be for the present. On the very last day, therefore, Count Eberhard was proposed, and contrary to all expectation, he consented to stand for the election. The friends, however, of the present ministry did not disdain to try to drive away the father of Countess Irma, by — I speak of facts, your Majesty, and not of mere opinions — by making the connexion of his daughter with your Majesty a disgrace to her father."

The king threw away the cigar he was smoking, and said hastily:

"Go on, tell me more!"

"Count Eberhard was however elected. When I was at Wildenort, at his funeral, I was told that it was at the election that he first heard of his daughter's position, and on his way home — I have inquired into the matter — he received letters which affected him deeply. Yes, still more. Here, your Majesty, this piece of a torn letter I found on the road, a man, at work there, told me that the Count had then torn up some letters."

Bronnen held out a piece of paper, on which were written the words — "Your daughter has fallen into dishonour, and stands in high repute as the king's mistress —"

"That may be the writing of the holy Hippocrates —" murmured the king to himself.

"Permit me, your Majesty, if you cherish the smallest suspicion against the physician, I am ready to stake my honour for him, and time will show that I do so with justice."

"Go on," said the king impatiently; it was unpleasant to him, that Bronnen should scrutinize him so, that he had understood what he had half murmured, and if he understood it, that he had not — according to his duty — avoided hearing it; he ought only to hear what was expressly said to him.

"It was on that return from the election," continued Bronnen calmly, "that Count Eberhard had a stroke of paralysis and was deprived of speech. In the last moments of his life, no one was with him but Countess Irma; a terrible cry was heard from her, and when they went into the room, she lay on the ground, and Count Eberhard was dead. Who knows what then took place. But that in these last moments, something

occurred which led her to this terrible resolve, is to me indubitable."

"And what is the object of this combination of circumstances?" asked the king.

Bronnen looked at him with astonishment.

"Your Majesty, the object is nothing more than to clear up this intricate affair."

After these words there was another pause, and this pause gave a peculiar meaning to Bronnen's last remark.

"Yes," began the king again, "it helps to clear it all. That was just her way, so natural and clear, and yet so conscious and strong. Well. Be it so. Bronnen, why should I hide it? I must tell you everything, I loved the countess, and now it tortures me to think it, and so let me tell you, — I now feel almost averse to her. By this suicide she has imposed a heavy burden upon me for my whole life. While I live, I shall never be able to lay aside this terrible weight. She must have known how it would overwhelm me. Tell me, candidly, I pray you, tell me: is this feeling not justifiable?"

"I am not speaking to the king, I am speaking to the man of clear mind and warm heart —"

Bronnen paused; the king started at seeing himself thus divested of his innate dignity. What would the severe man say, whom he had ordered to forget his rank.

"Speak!" said the king encouragingly.

"Then I will speak openly," began Bronnen, "man to man, human being to human being. There is a deep stirring of truth within you, when you upbraid yourself with feeling averse to your friend, because she has bequeathed you such a sad and lasting inheritance.

That, however, which torments you, is the ghost of your own act. You have broken through and violated the sphere of right of a being entitled to every good thing, it may be too, that this singular being in a state of frenzied flame, sacrificed herself. — Then began that which is now only the necessary and natural consequence. It is the ghost of your own act, which makes you restless and will make you so, till you perceive the truth. Every man, whatever his high position, stands opposed to others enjoying equal rights in their own sphere, thus forming a barrier of right. Once you have understood this, and in clear perception of the sin have overcome the sin, then you are free — whatever may have occurred. Superstition banishes every apparition with the formula: ‘All good spirits praise the Lord;’ our good spirit is that clear perception which we appeal to within us, or rather whose appeal within us we are ready to allow.”

They drove on silently for some time. Bronnen’s face burned, the king wrapped himself in the folds of his mantle, he was chilly and he kept his eyes shut. At last he sat up, and said:

“I thank her. She has given me a friend, a true man. You will remain to me.”

The king’s voice was hoarse. He wrapped himself more closely in his mantle, placed himself in a corner of the carriage and closed his eyes. Not a word more was spoken, till they reached the hunting seat. The king told his suite that he did not feel well, and that he would remain in the hunting seat. All proceeded to the forest, and the king remained alone with Bronnen.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

THE queen was sitting after breakfast in the music hall with the ladies of the court.

The first autumn mist was hanging over the landscape. It was a beautiful, fresh morning.

The queen had several papers in front of her. She pushed them away, saying:

"It is terrible, this license of the press! In this generally respectable paper, it is stated that the Count von Wildenort died of deep grief owing to the disgrace of his unmarried daughter. Is this permitted? Was such a thing ever heard of? — Ah! dear Counsellor," added she, turning to her private secretary, "on my desk upstairs, there lies a sealed letter to Countess Irma. Despatch a messenger at once with it to her. I trust she will hear nothing of this shameless newspaper-report."

The ladies of the court went on busily with their embroidery, and did not look up.

The mistress of the chamber was called away; she returned after a time with the physician.

"Ah! welcome!" cried the queen.

The mistress of the chamber signed to the ladies that they should retire.

"You have come just at the right moment," continued the queen, "a letter is just going from me to Countess Irma; you must also write a good word or two to her."

The physician commanded himself by force and replied:

"Your Majesty, Countess Irma will never be able to read your letter of comfort."

"Why not?"

"The countess is seriously ill."

"Seriously ill? You say it so but not dangerously?"

"I fear so."

"Doctor! Your voice What is it? The countess is not"

"Dead —" said the physician, and he covered his face with his hands.

All for a time was as still in the great hall, as if no human being were breathing there, till the queen exclaimed:

"Dead? from grief for the death of her father?"

The physician nodded.

By the queen's side stood the flower table which Irma had painted. The queen gazed at it long, and forgetting all around her, she burst forth in a heart-rending tone, with her gaze still fixed on the table, and the tears streaming from her eyes:

"Oh how beautiful she was, how sweet her breath, how beaming her eye, her glance so fancy-free, her every word so melodious, her voice full of the warbling of the lark, and her hand so soft — and all these beauties, all this love and goodness is now fled? I should like to see her in death! Yes — beautiful she must be, an image of peace. And she died in sorrow for her father, you say? From over-agitation — did you say? One single mighty feeling, one great violent emotion, broke that noble and ardent heart. Oh my sister — I loved thee like a sister — pardon me that ever a shadow . . . No, thou knowest — . . . Oh! my

sister! here are the flowers on the table conjured forth by thy hand — and thou art faded, withered, and decayed . . . and thou wast beautiful, more beautiful than all the flowers. I can see thine eye fixed upon every stroke of the brush. Thou did'st intend to give me undying flowers, and the remembrance of thee is a blossom that can never fade within my heart."

Her tears fell on the marble flower table. Her little dog came up to her, and she said:

"Thee too, she wreathed with flowers that time on my birth day. She wished to adorn everything, to beautify everything, on which her eye rested. And thou did'st love her too, poor Zephyr. Man and beast loved her! And now dead —"

She wept silently for some time. The tears flowed incessantly down her face.

"May I wear mourning for my friend," she inquired, looking up at the mistress of the chamber.

"Your Majesty, it is not the custom that the queen alone should go into mourning."

"Of course, we are not alone, never, nowhere. All mourn with us, — a mourning livery."

Her tone was bitter. She held out her hand to the mistress of the chamber, as if in apology, and asked:

"When will she be buried? where? I should like to lay the most beautiful wreath upon her grave. I will myself go to her, and weep on her pale face. Such a fair life, and so suddenly fled! Can it be possible? I must go to her!

Her gaze was fixed, and she inquired:

"Is the king at the chase?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"He too will weep, he too was loving to her as to a sister, I know it."

"The queen has much tact, much reserve," — was expressed in the glance which the mistress of the chamber threw to the physician — "I shouldn't have given her credit, for trying to make us believe with so much natural truth that she knew and surmised nothing"

"I will go to her," broke forth the queen suddenly, "I will not be prevented, I will see whether I may not do so! I will go to her, I will stand by her coffin, by her grave!"

The mistress of the chamber looked fixedly at the queen.

The physician approached, and said:

"Your Majesty, you cannot see the countess — grief for the death of her father affected her mind —"

"Then she's not dead?"

"There is no doubt that the countess drowned herself in the lake."

The queen looked horrified at the physician, she tried to speak, but could not. The physician continued:

"She has not left us without a farewell. She left a letter behind for your Majesty, which I am to deliver. The letter of course is intended to atone for the frightful tidings. Even to her last hour, she gave proof of her affectionate nature —"

The queen stared at Gunther, she tried to rise, and mutely made signs with her hand for the letter. Gunther handed it to her.

The queen read, and turned pale as a corpse, her features grew rigid, — she let her hands fall as if

paralyzed, her eyes closed, and an expression almost of death hung round her mouth. Presently she began to tremble as if with cold, and then a fiery flush suffused her face. She stood up, exclaiming:

"No — no! and this hast thou done? this hast thou done, Irma? thou. . . ."

She sank back on her chair, covered her face with her hands, and exclaimed:

"And she has kissed my child, and he has kissed his child! Oh! they kissed the purest, knowing how impure their lips were. They talked in the loftiest strain, and the words did not cut their tongues like sharp knives! Oh! how disgusting! — how disgusting! — how tainted is everything! how I loath myself! and he ventured to say to me that a prince can perform no private deed, for his actions are examples. Fye! everything is tainted, everything is loathsome! everything!"

She looked round confused. Beautiful as she had been in her grief for the sister who had died, terrible was she now in her indignation at the suicide.

She looked with a motionless gaze upon everything that had once met Irma's eye, and when her glance again fell upon the flower-table, she turned away with a start, as if serpents had darted from the flowers, and again she exclaimed:

"Oh! how loathsome! oh how tainted! all is loathsome! I pray you to leave me alone! may I not be alone?"

"Let me remain with you, your Majesty," said the physician, taking her hand which hung like a lifeless thing at her side.

The mistress of the chamber withdrew.

For some time the queen spoke not a word. He

eye was motionless. She breathed heavily, and started convulsively. She suddenly trembled with the chill of fever, and sank back insensible.

The physician applied some reviving essence to her forehead, and then calling her gentlewoman; he accompanied the queen to her apartments, and ordered that she should go to bed.

"I will never more see the day, nor a human face! and he — and he," — cried she. Then she forced her handkerchief into her mouth, and bit it.

For sometime she lay thus, the physician sitting silently by her bedside.

At length she sighed deeply, opened her eyes, and said:

"I thank you, but I wish to sleep!"

"Yes, sleep," said the physician. He was on the point of going, but the queen cried out:

"One word more! does the king know?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

"And he went to the chase?"

"He is king, your Majesty."

"I know, I know — let there be no fuss made! yes! yes!"

"I pray your Majesty not to think now, do not weary your mind now about anything, try to sleep."

"One can give oneself the eternal sleep, but not the temporal," said the queen. —

"I beg your Majesty most earnestly not to give way to this violent excitement, try to sleep."

"I will — I will! Good night. Give me a sleeping-draught, a drop of forgetfulness. Poison were better. Good night."

The physician withdrew, but he gave the gentleman Leoni a sign that she should remain in the next apartment.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

IN the hunting seat in the highlands it was silent and solitary. In the large apartment, round the walls of which, stags' antlers were hung and over the entrance door of which a stuffed bear's head stared, a bright fire was burning in the ample hearth. It was already cold here in the mountains. The king sat before the fire, with his eyes fixed on the blazing embers, shooting out tongues of flame intertwining with each other. Now and then he rose, and sat down again.

Below the antlers, tablets were fixed, marking the day and the successful huntsman. A long row of ancestors had increased these tokens of triumph. Suddenly the reports of guns, the blowing of horns, the barking of dogs were heard, all the voices of those present at the death, resounded, but the noise could not have been more confusing than the medley of thoughts which hovered round the head which the king supported on his hand.

He stood up, and read an inscription now here, now there. He could boast of mighty ancestors: they were full of solid power, and in the chase and social board they would have forgotten and overcome such an adventure as this which was now utterly dispiriting him and depriving him of his manliness and kingly dignity.

Have we become, he asked himself, more weak, more paltry and more faint-hearted?

The king sat down again and gazed into the fire. He was full of anger against himself, and yet he could not master himself.

We are no longer the old, simple, hardy men we once were, boldly disregarding the deed done. Why do our ancestors transmit to us merely pride in their power, and not the simple power as well?

What has happened?

Infidelity is no more to be blotted out, than is the dead to be called back to life.

The remembrance of all his happy intoxicated days rose before him, as if it would have said: it may not be, it cannot be.

Why ought she with her life thus to have destroyed mine? thought he. And she has destroyed it. The sense of death can never be evaded in my life. I bear for ever the guilt of murder in my heart.

He suddenly stretched out his hands to the fire, for they were cold. The fire burned brightly, but it did not warm his hands, and his heart felt congealed.

Was Bronnen right in seeing in the terrible affair only a result of his own act?

He broke out into a laugh, as the idea passed through his mind, what a chaos of blood and murder the whole world would be, if every similar false step brought about such a result. How many thousands. . .

A word spoken on a beautiful morning, in a time of cheerful happiness, flitted through his mind, like a melody, which suddenly floats into the memory; at that time—it was scarcely more than a year ago—the queen had said under the weeping ash: “Whoever commits a wrong, does it for himself alone, and does it for the first time in the world.”

Ah, why do we feel the highest sentiments so deeply and fully, and yet our actions are so incomplete and even worse?

Sitting gazing into the fire, the image of his wife passed from before his view and that of his friend arose, and the imagination of the desolate man seemed to follow her down to the depths of the lake.

The king rose quickly, and opened the window, and drew in a deep breath of the fresh mountain air, as he looked out into the dark night.

Outside was the world, veiled in itself, yonder the palace with its rich life, with wife and child, and far around lay the rich land, over which he ruled. Millions of lives were there, all appealing to him in their need, and was a single one now thus to draw him down?

The king turned round. He wished to have Bronnen summoned.

It was not good for him, thus to give himself up to solitude and the bad company of demons.

Nevertheless he still remained standing. Out of the night there rose a demon with a thousand sparkling cunning eyes; he had known it from his childhood, everywhere, and its name was: mistrust. — Who knows whether this worthy man, with his big words, is not cunningly making use of the despondency and tenderness of feeling into which thou art fallen, to satisfy his own selfishness? For selfish are all men, especially before the king. He wishes to command thee, and through thee the whole land. Who knows whether it is true that he loved her, and confessed his love to her? She would not have concealed it from thee, she would not have ventured to conceal it

from thee. He must have invented the story quickly that he might appear as a companion. But I know of no companion; I wish for none. If I do not accomplish everything alone for myself, I am no king. And if I am no king, what am I? No — most noble, and most wise and worthy man —

Still it was at variance with something within him, that he should be extending his ordinary depreciation of men to Bronnen also, but he would listen to no opposing voice. He drew himself up erect in his power and dignity. Presently a sound from the mountain forest met his ear. It was a stag. It was his first mournful and wild cry. The huntsman in the king awoke; he felt at his side as if he must seize his weapon. But quicker than the stag runs through the forest, the idea passed away, and another took its place, raising a smile on the countenance of the agitated man. The stag without was calling: nature knows no infidelity as that for the sake of which thou art now tormenting thyself. The law of nature knows no infidelity, it is the violent and arbitrary institution of man. But the law of nature knows also no king, no creature who rules over creatures of the same species. It is not nature alone which guides the life of man, another law is also ruling within him. Each beast has the law of its life born with it, man however is an heir and has a history; and now even a king. . . .

The king stood still for some time. He felt a shivering come over him; he closed the window, and seated himself again at the fireplace, where the embers were still burning. It was painful to him to be alone, but he forced himself to it.

The fire in the hearth was struggling uncertainly

with itself, now and then shooting forth a tongue of flame. The king still held in his hand the bright handle of the tongs, long after the coals had ceased to burn. For the first time in his life, the king distinctly felt an irreparable void in his existence. There was something which remained ever hollow, ever unsatisfied. What is it? Hunting and exercising, jesting and commanding, loving and ruling — there was still always something within him so empty and void. What is it? This everlasting disquietude, this longing for something else which is yet to come, and which is yet to be satisfied?

He had spent a happy youth; the free tone of his father's court had not affected him, he had lived in an ideal world; he had gone on his travels, and suddenly in the far distance the tidings of his father's death had called him home and to the throne which he ascended, ere he had scarcely arrived at man's estate. He had found his consort; there was no wooing, all was given to him, a throne, a country, a consort. Others might test their heart, might choose for themselves. — His consort was lovely and beautiful; he loved her, and she loved him indescribably. Presently, Irma appeared in his circle, and the husband, the father, and the king, was a victim to ardent love. And now dead, a rash suicide!

Will it now be possible for thee to live in obedience to the law?

The law! thou hast borne it reluctantly, and felt it like a fetter, but is not submission to the law the only indestructible, the highest power? Yes, there is an everlasting law. It is the law which unites thee to thy wife and to thy people. In this alone is everlasting life. . . .

Like a deliverance, like the first free breathing of the convalescent, the desolate man grasped at this truth; he could not quite seize it, and yet it seemed to him as if he must cry aloud: I am free! free, and one with the law!

He rose quickly. He was on the point of summoning Bronnen. But he restrained himself. Thou hast struggled alone, thou must bear it within thyself.

He felt as if suddenly that empty void, that vacant desolation, that restlessness urging him to something else and away from the present, was entirely filled up in him. He laid his hand on his loudly beating heart.

He rang, and sent word to Bronnen that he might go to rest, he sent the valet away who usually attended on him and repaired alone to his room.

Bronnen had waited from minute to minute, from hour to hour, expecting the king to summon him. He pondered over the circumstances in his mind.

Could it be possible that the death of Irma had more than a mere passing effect, and that the king at last was learning to reconcile himself to the law of life? What testimony of his confidence was the king going to give him? What could it be?

When hour after hour now passed away, and no message came from the king, Bronnen could not resist a feeling of bitterness. Who knows whether the king had even thought of him? He had for a time joined him in a mournful duet, now that was over, the piece had been, as it were, played, and as in a concert programme, a new one was coming.

Words which the old Eberhard had uttered arose in Bronnen's memory; when you are not present, not

before their very eyes — the old man had said, — royalty esteems you as little better than servants, waiting outside in the vestibule and on the steps, with warm mantles. They play, they dance, they laugh, and jest; who thinks for a moment that those outside have aching legs and are overcome with sleep? But there you must be and that without a murmur

Something of Eberhard's deep indignation came over Bronnen. He was a forgotten servant in the vestibule.

When late in the night, the king sent word by his valet that he might go to rest, he nodded; but something said within him: He has remembered thee after all. I am grateful. It is true, they are less neglectful of a companion in crime. . . .

SIXTH CHAPTER.

THE mountains were still veiled in the morning mist when the king sent for colonel Bronnen.

The latter entered with a respectful air; the king went towards him, and said:

"Good morning, dear Bronnen!" his voice was hoarse, he looked pale and unrefreshed. He took a sheet of paper from the table, and said:

"Here is the testimony which I promised you. Read it."

Bronnen read, and looked with amazement at the king.

"You know the handwriting?" asked the king.

"Not the handwriting, but the grand mental traits, I believe —"

"You are right, they are the last words which our lost friend left behind for me."

Bronnen with a certain air of solemnity placed the letter again on the table before the king. He did not venture to say a word.

"Sit down, I see your agitation."

"Certainly, your Majesty. And in spite of every thing, I read in these words a confirmation of my presentiment."

"Of your presentiment?"

"I have a presentiment whispering to me: Countess Irma is not dead."

"Not dead? And why?"

"I know not what to say, but the tokens which have been found in the lake and on the shore, tend rather to confirm my presentiment. The tokens are too complete."

"You have loved our friend, I believe it,—" said the king. "But still you have not fully known her. Countess Irma was not capable of a deception. And have I not told you that sailors have seen a woman's body floating in the lake!"

"Who knows what the sailors have seen! Nothing has yet been found."

"But on what do you rest your presentiment?"

"I can imagine it as a deed worthy of this great woman that she should have withdrawn into some convent, into concealment, in order to make your Majesty free, and true in your freedom."

"Free and true," repeated the king, half aloud. "You utter words there which are not to be reconciled, and yet must be united. Bronnen, you wish to show me a new path of life, and to remove the spectre of

death from my path; that unburdened, I may move on. But I am strong enough to know the full truth, and to decline all soothing delusions."

"Your Majesty, what I said, I said in full regardless truthfulness."

The king nodded, and Bronnen continued:

"But however this may be, these lines are the out-breathing of a great soul, and to know these thoughts realized, is well worth death. Now, your Majesty, the heaviest part of the weight must be uplifted from you. Your friend has not imposed a burden on you by her death and disappearance, she has set you free, and has left you for the sake of the country and for the realisation of the highest laws."

"Free and true," again repeated the king softly. "I should like from to-day to change the motto of my arms, and to place these words to them. But I will show — to you alone I acknowledge it — I will show that they are within me. Yes, my friend, I have during this night often read these words. At the first appeal yesterday, I did not grasp them; now I understand them. So long as we both live, we will keep this day, silently for ourselves. There was an expression you used yesterday, which frightened me, aye, and wounded me."

"Your Majesty!"

"Quiet yourself. You see we are friends. I promise you not again to allow my ill humour to last over a night."

"What expression?"

"It was 'constitutional king!' And when I read these words over again and again in the night, that expression occurred to me in every line. Can one be

a sovereign and be bound by a law? Look here, Bronnen, had I now to appear before the Eternal One, I could not unbosom my mind more freely. This expression of yours and the appeal of my friend, have aroused me. Can I be a sovereign, a complete man and king, and at the same time be fettered? And now I understand it. She says: 'Agree with the law that binds you to her and to the community.' Is there then free love in marriage? Is there then a free king in a constitutional state? There lies the point. I have conquered. Fidelity is self-awakened love. That which was an act of unconscious feeling and natural impulse, to hold that firm above all discordant moods, to animate it anew, to feel oneself one with it — this I have obtained, I have inherited everything, life, crown, and wife — this very night I have gained it. You cannot imagine with what spirits I have wrestled. I have conquered. 'Free and true' is the motto of my heart."

Bronnen hastened to the king in agitation.

"I have never in my life kneeled before any man," he cried, "I should like now —"

"No, not so, my friend!" cried the king, "come to my heart! we will work and do, holding fast by each other. It shall not be, that it is merely a legendary ideal, that a king acts freely, and entertains friendship — I will prove it. I stood before you yesterday as before a confessor. It does me good to pronounce this last word. No man — this I have learned to perceive — is worthy of working for the highest and the purest, whose hand and heart are not pure. There is no greatness that is not based on true morality. I utter in these words a verdict against my past life. I am not ashamed of acknowledging aloud what I have

said to myself. And now let us, as men, reflect what is to be done."

A ray of the purest happiness lighted up Bronnen's face, and at length he said:

"There stands a bright spirit between us —"

"Her memory shall be held in honour."

"I do not mean her," said Bronnen. "When I was speaking with Count Eberhard, he said: Honour pledges us to morality, fame still more, and power most of all."

The king and Bronnen discussed many things together. Before his friend, the king could simply and surely show the change that had taken place in him, but before the world, the court, and the country, this could only gradually and silently be manifested. A king cannot publicly repent.

Bronnen was in secret appointed prime-minister.

They still remained at the hunting seat, and went to the chase.

There was much to settle itself at the court before they could return there.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

"AND his Majesty the king sends you word with his hearty condolence, that if you wish for leave of absence for the arrangement of family affairs, or for inquiries and investigations at the lake, or for a longer journey for your diversion, your leave shall be sent after you for an indefinite time."

These were the last words with which the lord steward concluded his communication of the tidings of

his sister's death to the king's aide-de-camp; Bruno, Count von Wildenort. He pressed his hand, kissed him on his right and left cheek, and left him.

Outside, the lord steward fanned himself cool with his pocket handkerchief. He had heated himself in the difficult task assigned to him, but still he was obliged to confess that Bruno had received the terrible tidings with much composure.

Bruno, so long as the lord steward was there, had sat in the corner of the sofa, covering his face with his handkerchief, and listening quietly and patiently to it all, as if it were the tidings of some strange remote event which in no wise affected him.

Bruno was now alone. He sat silent for some time, playing, without knowing it, with a scented note which he had previously received.

Suddenly he started up, seized a chair, and broke it — the crackling did him good; then, as if possessed by a demon, he threw himself on the ground, and raved and writhed, and beat about with his hands and his feet, screaming terribly.

The servant came in and found his master on the ground, and raised him.

"I am ill!" he cried, "I am ill! No; I am not ill — I will not be so. Go at once to the gentleman of the bedchamber, von Ross, or to the superintendent, von Schöning, and request one of these gentlemen to come to me directly. If my wife inquires after me, say I have gone out with the master of the household."

The servant went, and Bruno stood at the window and looked out into the daylight; the mist was dispersing, and the park shone brightly. The gardener

was putting away faded-flower pots, and was replacing them with fresh ones; the mouse-coloured greyhound — Arabella's pet — was sitting on the gravel path, and scratching its slender head with its hind foot; it looked up at its master, and, in token of its pleasure, jumped and sprang round him.

Bruno saw it all, and was still thinking of something very different.

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, "I never thought that this world was anything else but a farce — an empty farce. He is a fool who frets away an hour — I will not! Now I am quite free," cried he, drawing himself up, "quite free! There is now no one else in the world whom I need have a regard for. World, I am free! — alone! Now let me have all the enjoyments thou hast, for seventy years — thou canst not harm me! I trample it all under foot!"

He listened without — nobody was coming.

Bruno had always lived in society, but never in the society of his thoughts. Now, in solitude and mourning they came to him — carelessly neglected companions, with eager look and merry glances — calling out: "Leave it all! come with us! be merry! what avails thy grieving? thou'lt be old before thy time!"

He stood before the mirror, and they called out: "See in the mirror how horrible you look!"

He could not keep his companions away; they played merry dances, they jingled their gold, and cried *va banque!* They rattled the glasses, and showed him seductive forms, and he heard dissolute laughter; they were everywhere about the room, seizing him, and wanting him to dance with them — but he stood still, clenching his fists, and could not go; and they

cried out again: "We know thee, thou art only ashamed — thou art a silly boy, and askest what the world thinks. Thou hast no courage! cheer up! Let it taunt thee, and be merry. If thou hast fretted away a day, no one can give it thee back again. Fie, at the beggar for sympathy! Go your way and say, 'I am a poor man, my father is dead, and my sister has drowned herself;' get a song to sing, and a signboard painted, and go about in the market-places, and let them give thee pennies! Fie! fie! Thou hast but one choice, to despise the world or to let it pity thee — which dost thou prefer? How many thousand times hast thou said: 'I despise the world,' and now art thou faint-hearted? Thou sittest here and wouldst gladly be out — who closes the door to thee? who has tied thy horse's feet? Thou, thou alone. Ah! the dear friends, the hearty beings, the sympathising souls — see, they will come one after another, and say: 'Be strong, be a man, overcome your grief and the world!' And what do they do, these good souls? They give thee a word of charity, and then they go to seek their pleasures and leave thee alone. To play, to dance, to carouse with thee — then are they staunch, then are they true companions — but now? No festivity is put off for thy sake — nothing, nothing at all. If thou wilt enjoy the world, thou must despise men. They only say to thee: 'Be a man' — and thou must be one!"

These thoughts persecuted Bruno to a state of frenzy, and the following days stood before him as a yawning unfathomable abyss . . . All was empty, void, hollow, joyless, wasteful solitude.

At last he was released by the announcement that the superintendent was there.

They had not usually been on the most friendly terms, but now Bruno embraced the superintendent as if he were his only friend in the world, and he lay on his neck and sobbed, and begged him not to leave him and abandon him to his loneliness. He raved and raged, he reviled and scoffed confusedly, that he — just he — should have met with all this misery. "Oh these weeks, these months, this horrible time that is now before me!" he exclaimed vehemently.

"Time heals everything," said the intendant consolingly.

"This time of mourning, these weeks and months!" cried Bruno again.

The intendant started. He had had a glimpse into this man's mind; a long time must elapse in which he would have always to wear an appearance of mourning — that was the hard thing! and this mourning could not have fallen at a more unfavourable time.

Bruno was engaged in the races, which were to begin in the next few days, with two of his best horses; he had wished to ride Zuleika himself in the trot-race, and for the great hurdle-race he had been training with care his jockey Fitz — he was really called Fritz, but Fitz was better — and for weeks he had been reducing his weight. Fitz was the son of the lacquey Baum, a thorough rogue, of whom his father was proud and whose future was secured, for there was no question, that if Fitz kept his limbs sound he would be the first jockey in the stables; he sat his horse like a cat and could not be easily thrown off.

The weather was full of promise, the sky was agreeably clouded; in the night it had rained a little,

which improved the condition of the course, and Fitz, in his green and white colours, was certain of winning the first prize. Bruno had prided himself not a little on these colours; he had divided Fitz in half, from the crown of his cap to his boots, his dress was grass-green on the right and snow-white on the left. It is only a pity that nature has but seven colours, for the variety we have at our disposal is far too limited; but with a little management a great deal may be done, and Bruno smiled behind the handkerchief he held up, as he thought of the one green boot and other white one!

"I shall of course not ride myself," he said to the superintendent. "Do you think it decorous that I should let my servant ride? I can — can I not?" He added quickly, as if he feared a negative reply. "They would set it down to me as avarice — for I have a good deal of money staked on the race. I will let my Fitz ride; yes, that I must do — and that I may do!"

Scarcely had he said this when Fitz entered the room. Bruno harshly told him to go away. He was resolved to behave as if he had quite forgotten the races. This would show his sorrow far more than if he withdrew his engagement. He would allow himself to be punished for his non-appearance. By this would the world perceive how profound and all-absorbing was his sorrow.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

THE superintendent sat on the sofa by Bruno's side and held his hand — it was hot with fever.

Now that he had found the key to Bruno's character and state of feeling, he understood what was meant, when the mourner exclaimed:

"I know all that is going on in the world. To-day and to-morrow there's the chase in Wolfswinkel; and the day after to-morrow, the races. I only wonder that in one hour I have not forgotten everything. His Excellency von Schnabelsdorf is now witticising with the beautiful lady of the ambassador von N. Then comes the relieving guard, and this evening there is a *banquet* at Prince Arnold's — yes, the whole world goes on in its old track. Could I but forget the world! The world forgets me — who thinks of the solitary mourner? Oh! forgive me, my truly loved, my only friend in the world! You will remain with me! You will never leave me — never! I am a prey to distraction, leave me not alone!"

The superintendent was sincerely sorry for the poor man. He was invited to dine with the master of the horse, and he wished only to go away for a moment to excuse himself personally; but Bruno would not let him go, and induced him to write his excuse.

"Yes, certainly; I will remain with you," said the superintendent consolingly. "A friend who is with us in sorrow is like a light in the night; it obliges us, or at least it gives us opportunity, to see the objects around us, and to know that a world is still there, and that we must not bury ourselves entirely in the night of solitude."

"Oh, you understand. Tell me what I shall do, what I shall begin; I know nothing. I am like a child which has lost its way by night in a wood."

"Yes, that you are."

Bruno looked up hastily; that the intendant should acknowledge this so thoroughly seemed to him nevertheless scarcely right.

"I am only so weak now," he said; "think what the last few days have brought upon me."

There lay a strange mixture of gentleness and bitterness in his tone.

"May I smoke?" he asked again.

"Certainly, do so; do anything which is consoling to you."

"Oh no — nothing is consoling to me; but still I should like to smoke."

He lighted a cigar. . .

The world had however not quite forgotten him, as he had said in his anger. A visitor was announced. He quickly threw his cigar away. The stranger world was not to see that he was smoking; it was not to believe that he was unfeeling, that he did not mourn for his father and sister.

Many visitors came, and Bruno was constantly obliged to give vent to his grief, and to allow himself to be consoled with. He saw now how the flood of rumour respecting Irma's death had reached the capital, from the palace to the cottage. People, with whom he generally stood on no friendly terms, visited him now; even some ill-wishers came, and he was obliged to receive them all with friendliness, to thank them all, and to acknowledge their apparently cordial sympathy, whilst in many an eye he fancied he could read mali-

cious pleasure; but he was obliged to act as if he had not seen it. His manner retained its melancholy, only now and then there was something strange in it.

His merry companions also visited him, and it was most curious to see the serious air which the young cavaliers put on; many an eye wandering the while to the large mirror — for the serious expression became them well. It almost seemed comical to them that the man who was always so merry, and could make the best and most unequivocal wit, should now be so downcast. They sat down, astraddle the chairs with their arms resting on the back; they lighted their cigars, and much was spoken of their respective fathers.

“My father has been dead for two years.”

“My father is sick.”

“My father wishes to retire on his pension.”

“How old was your father?” they asked Bruno. He did not know, but he said at random:

“Sixty-three.”

They talked also of the races, at first cautiously and gently, but afterwards noisily. They mentioned Baron Wolfsbuchen’s great loss.

“What has happened to him?”

“He struck Fatima — that splendid black mare — when she would not obey, with his sword on the mouth; he had forgotten that the sword was sharp.”

They spoke of the loss of his stakes, and of the horse, but the barbarous act drew forth no word of blame.

At last his companions went away; once outside, they severally stretched themselves, and said: “Well, well! that’s done!” Such a visit of condolence is a piece of funeral parade, and one’s words are like

muffled drums. Even on the carpeted stairs they began to whisper slanders, and to tell how Bruno had forbidden his mother-in-law to come to the capital, as their Majesties had been gracious enough to stand sponsors for the young scion. Once together, it was natural to take a good luncheon in common, and to drink canary wine. The conversation soon grew loud in the French restaurant, and Bruno also became the subject of it.

"He will now be fabulously rich — he has a double inheritance."

"If he had known that a year ago, who can say whether he would have married the Steigeneck? his creditors would have waited."

"He inherits also his sister's jewels — these are of enormous value."

As if he were two beings — one here, and one there — Bruno might have followed his companions when they had left him; he surmised what they were saying, and once he looked round suddenly, as if he had heard them laugh; it was nothing, however; his sister's parrot, which he had had brought into his ante-room, had uttered a strange sound; he ordered it again to be taken back to Irma's apartment, as he did not know whether it belonged to her as her own, and its eternal "good day" was obnoxious to him.

He walked a long time about the room with his thumb stuck into his buttoned coat, and his fingers playing a merry though inaudible tune upon his breast. He was annoyed in his heart at every visit of condolence; it is so painful to be obliged to put on a sad expression, to receive consolation, to express thanks for sympathy, when it is all only a lie, or a conventionality at best —

one is indeed bound to show condolence with another in misfortune. Perhaps people regret that in this also, as in a funeral, they can't send their empty carriages — that is enough to indicate that the mourning is great and general, and the funeral magnificent. All this Bruno now felt in his melancholy ill-humour. There they go, he thought, the old and the young, in uniform and in civil costume, twisting their moustachios and stroking their chins with a self-satisfaction, saying to themselves: Thou hast done a good deed, thou art an exact and feeling man — and at home they tell their wives and daughters: The king's aide-de-camp is so-and-so — and then they eat and drink, and take their walks, and say in their exultation: Thank God, we ought to be satisfied when everything is smooth, and no misfortune has entered our family. Upon the misfortunes of others they build a platform, from which they can overlook their own prosperity. Bruno's fingers played quicker and quicker upon his breast. To die, to be in sorrow, to be ill — this belongs to the lower classes, not to the higher! the world is miserably arranged that there is no preservation from evil, and that one cannot purchase absolution from it.

His Excellency von Schnabelsdorf also came. Bruno was hostile to him in his heart; for from this man designedly originated the witticism which gave the old dancer, Baroness Steigeneck, the sobriquet of "Miss Mother-in-law." Bruno, however, was constrained to behave as if he knew nothing of it; he was obliged to be friendly, and gratefully to press the hand of his Excellency; he was obliged to submit to a kiss from the lips which had attached a disgraceful title to his family — for Schnabelsdorf stood just now highest in the

court favour, and Bruno could not do without his friendship, doubly necessary now that his main support — his sister — was taken from him.

Thus Bruno felt annoyed at every visit of condolence he received, and at those too which he did not receive. The world was so considerate, always to speak only of the misfortune, of the sudden and unexpected death of Irma — how she was thrown from her horse and fell into the lake. Indeed the vice-master of the horse obstinately asserted that Pluto had never been properly broken in. Bruno himself behaved as if he really believed that Irma had met her death by accident.

But alone by himself, he revelled in accurately imagining the scene of the suicide, and how Irma was held fast deep in the lake below by her long hair clinging to the rocks — he could not banish the awful picture from his fancy, and at last he was obliged to throw open the window, that he might divert himself with external objects.

Bruno was not inclined to take anything; the superintendent only induced him to do so by ordering dinner for himself. Bruno was obliged to sit down with him. But at every mouthful and at every draught, he said: "I cannot." At last he ordered some champagne.

"I must get the steam up," he growled out, thrusting the bottle into the ice-pail; "I have as little enjoyment of it as the engine has of its coals."

He swallowed the wine hastily, and ate with the saddest manner, as if he would every moment burst into tears.

He ordered more champagne to be brought.

"Do you see," he cried, looking out of the window,

and his eyes were red, "there is the merchant Kreuter riding Count Klettenheim's chesnut horse. They must have played high last night, that the count should have given up that horse, for he is his pride, his boast — what is Klettenheim without his chesnut horse? A cypher, a double zero! Ah, dear friend, excuse me; I am speaking in a fever — I am ill. But I will not be ill! I will say nothing more! Do you speak as you will."

The superintendent had nothing to advance; he was as much afraid as if he had been shut up in a dungeon with a madman.

"I wish to speak with the lacquey Baum," cried Bruno suddenly. The superintendent was obliged to dispatch a telegram to the summer palace, to order that the lacquey Baum should be sent to the king's aide-de-camp.

Bruno let down the curtains, rang for lights and fresh bottles of wine, and gave orders that no one should be admitted.

The superintendent was in despair, but Bruno exclaimed:

"Friend! everything on earth is suicide, only with this difference — that one can afterwards live again. The time which one kills, that is rightly lived!"

The superintendent feared an outbreak of delirium, but Bruno was no cavalier who has only so much mind as a glass of champagne produces, and at best can only write a polite billet, and devise a witty impropriety. Bruno would have derided the man who would have expected a system from him, and yet he now asserted that he had one; and, filling his glass afresh,

he exclaimed: "Yes, friend, there are only two species of human beings in the world."

"Men and women?" said the superintendent — he fancied himself obliged to assume the same tone, in order to divert him from it.

"Pooh!" interrupted Bruno. "Who is speaking of that? Listen, friend, listen: the two species are — the enjoying and the suffering. He who lives for so-called ideas, — that is good, beautiful, exalted! But the ideal being may even kill himself, burn himself, it is his duty — he lives but a short time for himself, but he lives instead long and enduringly in the remembrance of men. The reckoning is balanced. Is it not so?"

The superintendent was obliged to assent — what could he do?

"And the second species," continued Bruno, "comprises us, the enjoying. The best thing on earth is resultless enjoyment. When I smoke, or when I play or listen to music, I can do anything afterwards, nothing disturbs me. All other enjoyments have unfortunately results — results. One ought to have no family! no family! no family!"

Suddenly Bruno began to weep passionately. The superintendent knew not how to help him. He reproached himself with not having somewhat restrained Bruno from wine and conversation. Bruno laid his head back, and the superintendent wrapped a piece of ice from the dinner-table in a handkerchief and placed it on his forehead.

"Thank you!" said Bruno, as he closed his eyes. "Thank you!"

He soon fell asleep.

The servant entered. Bruno awoke. The super-

intendent drew aside the curtain and opened the window — it was still midday.

The tidings came that the lacquey Baum had already started with the court physician, Dr. Sixtus.

"Then we will go alone!" exclaimed Bruno, who had regained his composure.

"Where?"

"Don't you see my grief causes this; I thought I had already told you everything; we must go to the lake to search for traces of the unfortunate girl. Didn't I really tell you this?"

"No; but I am at your disposal. I will ask for leave for myself and also for you."

"It is not necessary. His Majesty has already proffered it, his Majesty is very gracious — very. He thinks that we serve him because we love him and are subject to him. Ha! ha! We only serve him because we can enjoy ourselves better and in greater variety in the society of his court! He is our host, and he is himself glad to take his titbits by stealth behind the bar. — I pray you, dear friend, what have I said? You have not heard — have you? It was delirium. I am growing delirious! I must go out! Let us start this very day!"

The superintendent assented. He had, however, some necessary arrangements to make previous to his absence, and he went away for an hour.

Bruno desired his servant to pack up, and ordered that two riding-horses should at once be sent beforehand to the lake.

NINTH CHAPTER.

BRUNO was standing in his room, surrounded by a variety of luggage, when the servant announced his gracious mother-in-law.

"She here? and in spite of the prohibition?" it passed through his mind. "Show her in," said he to the servant, who quickly threw open the folding-doors, and closed them behind the lady who entered.

"Oh my good mother!" exclaimed Bruno, on the point of hastening to her and embracing her; but she only extended her hand to him, and said:

"Pray, pray not!" Then sitting down on the sofa, she continued:

"Come nearer! — sit down!"

"Do you know —?" inquired Bruno.

"Everything. You have nothing to tell me."

"Thank you for having come to comfort me."

"I am glad — I will say rather, it is a satisfaction to find you so composed. Arabella doesn't know anything yet?"

"No."

"Nor must she hear of anything. . . What does this luggage denote?"

Bruno looked with astonishment at the inquirer. Who had any business to ask? and in such a tone?

"I am going on a journey," replied he bluntly; then however, to prevent any scene taking place, he added in a mild tone: "I must, as brother, set about some inquiries with regard to the accident."

"I allow that. It is proper," said the baroness.

"Have you already come to an understanding with him? . . . You don't understand me, as you do not answer? I mean with this king."

"Yes," replied Bruno boldly; "but I have pledged my word to make no further communication."

"Good. I esteem discretion. But now, a candid word with you. Will you close the portière?"

Bruno did as he was ordered. He ground his teeth as he walked to the door; but when he turned round again, his manner was again friendly and attentive.

"Speak — no one is listening. A mourner listens patiently," he said.

"A mourner? We have other reasons for mourning than you have. We thought we had allied ourselves with one of the most esteemed families in the land."

Bruno was on the point of starting up.

"Pray, don't trifle with me," continued the baroness, and her voice and figure were changed, "we are alone; unmasked. My son-in-law, you have never regarded me, in spite of all outward propriety, with the respect which I must demand — I beg you, do not contradict me; let me finish what I have to say! I was not angry with you about it, when I coolly considered it. I know my position. But now, son-in-law, things are different. I was what your sister . . . and I never feigned virtue. I was esteemed by the world, what I in truth was . . ."

Bruno sighed deeply. The baroness continued in a consoling tone:

"I could have kneeled in humility before your sister, that time when she was so cordial to us. She

must give me back my humility out of hell-fire. It was not she who was the better — it was I. But, let the dead rest! Now however, my son-in-law, there is an end of your proud behaviour towards me. This I say to you: you must be happy that we are united with you. We shall never let you feel this, if you demean yourself suitably."

"And do I not?" asked Bruno, who had lost all his self-command at this attack.

"We will see. One thing before all: I shall in future live with Arabella as often as I will, and as long as I will. This tedious moral queen has now had her lesson too. I do not, however, desire the court; but the circles of society are open to me — I shall enter them on your arm, my gallant and amiable son."

The old woman rose and bowed very elegantly, offering her arm to Bruno. The latter took the hand of his mother-in-law, and held it to his lips.

"Fie! you have been drinking wine in your sorrow?" cried the old danseuse suddenly, holding her fine strongly-perfumed pocket-handkerchief to her lips.

"Miss Mother-in-law," was on the point of Bruno's tongue; he would have liked to cast it in her face. Presently steps from without approached. The superintendent entered the room like a deliverer.

"Pardou, I will not disturb you," he exclaimed, on seeing Bruno's mother-in-law there.

"You don't disturb!" replied Bruno quickly. "My good lady mother-in-law" — he said, "lady" with a somewhat strong emphasis — "our good mother, now grandmother, has hastened to us, in spite of a violent attack of fever, to give us comfort. I am happy to have still some true belongings in the world, and to

have a friend like you. I will live entirely for the family still left to me."

The Baroness danced nodded. Bruno had passed through the first trial of his new *rôle* to her satisfaction.

"We shall not now start to-day?" inquired the superintendent.

"Yes, yes — we will not stay a minute longer."

The mother-in-law undertook to inform Arabella of Bruno's necessary absence, which was to be designated as a matter of business.

Bruno thanked her, while with a kind of studious slowness he drew on his black gloves; and he thanked her sincerely — for in the very midst of the thought which burdened him heavily, that he was now in a state of dependence, there glimmered a hope of something of deliverance; it was too troublesome that as a husband he had to devote himself so much to his wife — she always required to be amused and surrounded with admiration. When the mother-in-law was in the house — it was a matter, it was true, full of disadvantages — Arabella would then have many hours of natural society, in which he would be free.

The farewell was short and hearty; Bruno was permitted to kiss his mother-in-law's cheek. But when seated in the carriage, he wiped the rouge from off his lips, and rubbed them till they were almost sore.

It was already evening when they drove away, and they passed the night at the first posting-house. Bruno lay down only for the sake of a little rest, but he did not awake till late on the following morning.

TENTH CHAPTER.

THE queen slept in her apartment, overpowered with grief.

The court ladies sat together on the terrace under the weeping ash; they were not inclined to-day to separate at all, there was a sort of fear of ghosts hanging about them. Here, in the very midst of them, a few days ago, had Irma been; she had sat there on the bench without a back — she never leaned against anything — the place where she had sat was now empty; and if the paths were not every morning freshly raked, the print of her footstep would still be there: and now to have vanished from the world, to have died — and in such a terrible manner! And who could say how long this ghost would haunt the palace, and what mischief it might still work? The world knew now what had happened.

The ladies worked assiduously at their embroidery. Generally they read by turns aloud — of course some French novel, — but to-day the book lay undisturbed on the table; intense as was the interest in the further progress of the narrative, no one ventured to-day even to propose that the reading should be continued. Nor did a connected conversation seem suitable; only now and then some voice said: "Dear Clotilda, dearest Anna, will you lend me some violet, or some pale green? Ah! I can't thread my needle, I tremble so. Have you got a threading-machine?" It was fortunately there; no one wished to appear so little agitated as to be able to thread a needle!

They bewailed Irma, and it did them good to be able now to be so kind and merciful; they were happy in generously forgiving the unhappy girl, and since they were so mild and pardoning, they could discount her crime all the more severely. They thus avenged themselves for the self-humiliation they had endured for while Irma had stood in the height of favor, they had done greater homage to her than to the queen.

They spoke with each other only reverentially of the royal pair — with all their apparent confidence they did not trust each other — they felt and knew that a crisis was approaching, but they dared not behave as if they saw it.

The mistress of the chamber alone spoke well of Irma.

"Her father was much to blame;" said she, "he instilled this unbelief into her."

"Still, he had her educated in the convent."

"But she inherited from him an almost hateful contempt of all forms and traditions. In this lay her misfortune. Hers was a beautiful, richly endowed nature and there was not a vestige of envy and ill will in her heart."

No one contradicted the mistress of the chamber. It was perhaps a part of court etiquette to speak only well of Irma, and entirely to forget her terrible act.

"If her brother had known that he would be sole heir, who knows whether he would have married the Steigeneck," said a small slender lady softly to her neighbour, as they bent over a wool-basket.

The lady spoken to, looked at her with grateful

sadness; she had formerly loved count Bruno, she loved him still.

"I have still a book of hers."

"And I a drawing."

"And I some music," was heard here and there. They had a certain horror of all that Irma had possessed; and it was agreed that everything should be sent to her brother.

"I went early this morning past her rooms," said the ever-freezing court lady of the Princess Angelica, as she rubbed her hands, and breathed on her finger points; "the windows were open, and I saw the lonely parrot in its cage, and he kept calling out 'Good day, Irma!' it was dreadful"

All shuddered, and yet they had a secret pleasure in the horror they felt. The religious court lady joined the circle, and mentioned that Doctor Sixtus had just bid her adieu; that he was travelling with the notary Fein to the mountains, and was taking the lacquey Baum also with him, to search for the body of Countess Irma.

"Will he bring her here, or to her paternal castle?"

"How terrible to be gaped at, when dead, by common people."

"Horrible, it makes me shudder."

"Give me your scent-bottle, will you?"

A bottle of English smelling salts passed from nose to nose round the circle.

"And to get a spontaneous funeral oration from every man and every woman."

"This public suicide has something very unbecoming in it."

"If there were no horrid papers," lamented the freezing court lady.

The conversation nevertheless soon assumed a moderately cheerful tone.

"Ah, me!" exclaimed a court lady, who was both pretty and naive. "Ah me! how in her time of power we had to be enthusiastic for beautiful nature, and the well-disposed peasantry. Now it is to be hoped that we may say, without being regarded as heretics, that nature is tedious, and the peasantry detestable."

The remark of the beautiful and witty court lady was considered malicious by all, it is true, but excessively just. There was a merry confusion of conversation and laughter as in the most joyous days.

A wanton boy shoots a sparrow from the roof. The flock of sparrows chirp and call for a time, and hang their wings as it were in sadness, but presently they hop and twitter noisily together as before.

For the sake of truth it must however be said, that many of the assembled ladies would gladly have spoken well and honourably of Irma; but they kept their feelings in the back-ground — they would not be sentimental for all the world.

It was only when the mistress of the chamber again began to speak, that they became also more measured.

The mistress of the chamber expressed by her very bearing and manner: I am unfortunately the one who prophesied it; it has been now fulfilled; but I am not proud of 'it. It was both her right and her duty to speak compassionately, and at the same time positively, with regard to Irma.

"Eccentricity, yes, eccentricity," said she. "Poor Countess Wildenort! the publicity of her act is a

heavy offence. But do not let us forget, in her terrible fate, that she had also indisputably good qualities. She was beautiful, she loved to please, and at the same time she was without a vestige of coquetry; she had mind and wit, but she never misused them for slander. The poor eccentric creature!"

With this designation of eccentric, Irma was buried, and the other court ladies received a lesson at the same time.

The eyes of the assembled party were directed towards the valley.

"There goes the carriage," they said. Doctor Sixtus saluted them from the road; by his side sat the notary, and opposite to them — he was too tired to-day to sit on the box — was the lacquey Baum.

"It is scarcely a year since we made this same journey together," said Sixtus to Baum.

Baum was not very talkative, he was tired; after a good deal of trouble he had to-day gone through the great test, and could acknowledge to himself that he had not come off badly; moreover, he could not yet quite reconcile himself to the fact that he was sitting inside the carriage, and still he ventured to suppose that that would now be his place; he stood at the very point of becoming another man, a higher one, he had already become so, only the outer tokens were wanting; he was willing even to remain a simple lacquey, perhaps the king wished it, in order not to betray himself, and he was ready to indulge him in this; he and the king knew how they stood to each other. He smiled to himself, he felt like a girl who has received her lover's declaration of love, his most ardent vows; the formal wooing can take place at any hour.

When the court physician had taken out a cigar, Baum was ready at once to give him a light. This was, however, his last act of service for the present. Baum was so impolite — nature was not to be overcome — as to fall asleep in the presence of the gentlemen; but even in sleep he was well schooled, he sat bolt upright, and was ready at any moment to obey a summons.

Baum only woke up when they halted. The acute inquiries of the lawyer first disturbed his repose. Of what import was the death of a countess, thought he, if one rises by it? He was deeply annoyed that his family, mother, brother, and sister, were mixed up in the matter, and had not Thomas said something of the death of Esther? or had he only dreamed it? one gets quite confused with so many events.

The court physician apologized to the lawyer for Baum's unconnected narration.

Baum looked amazed at him. Did he already perceive his promotion, and wish to curry favor with him? He was cunning enough for any thing.

Baum's purpose was, for a time only to show the spot where he had found the hat and shoes, and leave his mother and brother entirely out of the question, at least he did not wish to draw them in himself, and he referred to the gendarme, whom they ought to take with them. The gendarme was obliged to be sought for in the little market town, and then their road lay to the assize town, where Doctor Kumpan lived.

Sixtus sent for the latter to the hotel, and the ever merry man was full of the praise of the Countess Irma. He thought it very beautiful that she had the courage to live as she wished, and to die as she wished. Kum-

an had his joke besides, that friend Schniepel was selected for such high missions as seeking wet-nurses, and finding corpses. He ended by begging to be allowed some day to dissect a countess.

Doctor Sixtus did not at all approve of the coarse jests of his former fellow student. Doctor Kumpan told of the great change which had taken place in Walpurga's circumstances; that she had removed with her whole family far into the mountains near the frontier. He had many jesting stories to tell of Hansei, and especially about a wager for six measures of wine.

Sixtus informed his comrade in an under tone — but ill Baum heard it — that Walpurga was no longer a favorite at court, and that it would be discovered that she was the medium employed. Sixtus repented immediately that he had communicated any thing of the sort to Kumpan, but just because he had nothing much to say to him, he said exactly that which he had really wished to conceal from him; it was done, however, and he made his friend promise not to speak any more of the affair, and Kumpan was always a man of his word.

When Kumpan had left, Baum came again to Sixtus and told him, that he thought it would be well for them to go to Walpurga, as she might perhaps know something; he offered at the same time to go by himself. It grew more and more painful to him to come in contact with his mother and brother in this fair. But Sixtus said that the journey was quite superfluous, and that Baum was to remain with him.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Bruno's mood was quite changed on the morrow. What was the use of it? Was he to act the fable of the little brother and sister, how the little brother goes in search of the lost sister? What would the result be? An agitating sight, never to be forgotten, which would haunt him in his dreams, a disfigured drowned corpse

Bruno looked moodily at his friend, when he congratulated him on having slept so well, and gained fresh strength to meet with fortitude the agitating events which the day might bring. Bruno looked bitterly at the superintendent, aye, really mistrustfully; it seemed to him, indeed it was almost certain, that this man regarded the whole occurrence as a tragical theatrical piece, that must be properly put on the stage; that he was using it all as a study for a similar representation; so that he was observing him in every manner and gesture, that he might tutor his actor to throw himself into this posture — to assume this attitude and to utter a groan of sorrow and anguish when the dead sister is found! — Am I the puppet of the puppet? I will not be so.

Bruno would have liked best to have travelled back and gone to his mother-in-law. Even if he had to succumb before her — he could change humility into gallantry, and it was not necessary to expose himself to such terrible scenes. But here was his friend encouraging him to neglect nothing, which the duty of a brother demanded. Oh! ye tender hearted! You are

the most horrible race of mortals, for you take everything so seriously. Is it really serious with them? Who knows! every one in the world is only playing his part

He must go, and he saw his fate before him; this terrible friend, who would act in conformity with duty — and after all he was not his friend — this man whom he had charged himself with, would compel him for days to seek the awful object which he did not wish to find.

They drove on in a depressed discontented humour. The superintendent turned to Bruno, who thanked him formally for every act of assistance, and said:

“Pray don’t thank me. I am only doing my duty to you as a friend, and to myself also. You know, I once loved your sister, but she refused me.”

He was discreet enough not to add, that he had afterwards declined her overtures, and Bruno groaned inwardly at this forbearing discretion.

The superintendent found Bruno very silent and reserved. It is the natural reaction after yesterday’s excitement, thought he, and he remained silent likewise. Bruno often looked at the superintendent as if he were his jailor who was leading him across the country, for the execution of his sentence.

The journey continued quickly; at the different post houses, where horses were changed, the superintendent spoke fluently and readily with postilions and hosts in the native dialect; several of them also knew him.

To his alarm, Bruno now remembered that he actually had the Tyrolese of the salon with him; the man was now in the very atmosphere of his idiocracy, he was at home here, he could make his

studies and revel in the pleasure of speaking with the people in their absurd German.

In fact, the friend, — for so he must still be called, — could with difficulty refrain from a certain expression of delight at being here in his element.

At length from the last mountain, they caught sight of the distant sparkling surface of the lake, surrounded by gigantic heights.

“Do you see,” said the superintendent, unable to restrain himself, “do you see the maple tree there? Yonder to the left by the small rock — that is the point from which the sketch was taken for the picture which I painted, and which hangs in the music hall of her majesty the queen.”

The friend also imagined that by this remark, he could direct Bruno's heavy thoughts to calmer subjects, so that the terrible idea might not obtrude itself, of his sister having sought death in the depths below.

Bruno looked at him with an expression of displeasure. Every one thinks only of himself — something said within him — this coxcomb is now thinking of his bungling work! He was silent nevertheless; his silence expressed more sorrow than all words. He rubbed his eyes, for the dazzling reflection of the sun from the vast lake made them ache. His friend seized his hand and pressed it silently — he understood this fraternal heart, and his expression said: men imagine that you are a superficial and frivolous nature; I know you now better.

Bruno's horses, which were standing on the landing place by the lake, neighed as the travellers approached, and the grooms were in waiting. Now for the first time, Bruno felt ashamed before his servants:

they knew everything, how they must have gossiped in the tap-room! He felt thoroughly angry with his sister, who had inflicted all this on him.

They learned at once in the inn, that the 'old Zenza had been there; that she had wished to sell or pawn a ring, which the maid-of-honour, who had drowned herself, had given her the night before, when she had lost her way, and had reached her hut. They had of course given her nothing for it, as they considered the ring to have been stolen. It was now decided that Zenza must know particulars. They took a guide and walked up the mountain to her hut.

Bruno, being a huntsman, was usually a good climber, but to-day he felt as if he should fall at every step; he was often obliged to rest.

His friend encouraged him on, and they walked through the sunny wood, where the light played brightly on the soft moss, and many a hawk uttered its wild shrill cry as it wheeled above in the air.

At a crossroad, they met a group of men and women, in town attire, with their hats adorned with green branches and wreaths. Bruno fled from the road down into the wood, before the merry travellers approached; but the superintendent was recognized by a former colleague, and Bruno heard the information given that the visitors at a small bathing place in the neighbourhood, were making an excursion to see the place, where the Countess Wildenort had drowned herself.

The group passed by, and their loud and cheerful conversation was heard far into the wood.

At length they reached the root-hut. It was closed. They knocked; an answer was growled out, and the bolt from within was pushed back.

A neglected and powerful figure, of the wildest appearance, stood before them.

Thomas at once recognized Bruno and exclaimed:

“Ah, Wildenort! It's right that thou'rt here! I'll take my hat off to thee, for thou'rt a thorough man! What's the use of further ceremony with a father! When he is dying, ride away; one can't very well help him to die. Ho! ho! Thou'rt a thorough man! Let the old matter rest.”

“What do you want?” asked Bruno in a trembling voice.

“I'll do nothing to thee, thou hast my hand on it, I'll do nothing to thee — thou'rt doing nought to the king for just such a matter, and I'll do nought to thee for just such a matter. Thou'rt my king. In her last hour I got it out, that it was thou, and because it was thee, she aided thy sister. Thou understand'st well. I am silent. The stupid world don't need to know, what there is between us. Sister, king, poacher, count, — it's all in form.”

“The man seems to me to be crazed!” said the intendant to the guide. “What do you want? Let the gentleman go!” he called out to Thomas.

“Is that thy lacquey? Where is he then with the coal blaek hair? — Let us go!” said Thomas, turning to the superintendent. “We two understand each other. Don't we, brother? Thou'rt a brother, and I'm a brother too. Yes, the world is wisely arranged. Thou mustn't think that I am drunk. I have drunk, it's true, but that makes nothing — I am proof against that. Now, hear my plan. All is right and just. I'll listen to reason. I see well that thou'rt an orderly man, thou com'st to me —”

"We wish to ask thee, whether thou know'st aught of the lady in the blue riding-habit, who was here," said the superintendent in correct dialect.

"Heigh-ho!" exclaimed Thomas, "he can speak finely! But I understand too priests' German, and judges' German. I have had my share with such people. But don't thou interfere any more;" then turning to Bruno, he continued: "Let us two now talk alone together. Now hear, brother. We'll make a compact. Thou'st no need to make me a count, if thou'lt give me servants and horses and money enough, and chamois in the forest and deer; thou'lt see, I am cunning, and I am strong and sound too; wilt try a fight with me? Come out, thou'lt see I can shoot better nor thee! Now give me the inheritance of thy sister or my sister, it's all one — and thou'lt see, we are a couple of merry brothers!"

Bruno stood still, not knowing whether he was dreaming or waking; some of the words of the insolent fellow were clear to him, others not. He signed to the superintendent to leave him, and then he said in a mild tone:

"Thomas, I know you now. Sit down!"

Thomas sat down on the seat, lifted up the mug of brandy, which he had bought with the money for the hat, and said: "Will you have a drink?"

When Bruno declined, he drank it himself in greedy draughts.

The superintendent said in French to Bruno that there was nothing to be found out here; secretly however he had charged the guide as soon as they had turned away, to hold the wild fellow fast so that they might return unhindered to the valley.

"What language is the simpleton speaking?" exclaimed Thomas, on the point of flying at the superintendent. At the same moment the guide threw himself upon Thomas, and held him fast, while the two gentlemen left the tent, and ran hastily down the mountain.

It was not till the guide arrived that they paused, and Bruno ventured to draw breath. The guide told how Thomas had raved, how he had called out for his gun, which he had hid in the wood, for that he wanted to shoot his brother-in-law.

"It were best," concluded the guide, "that the fellow drank himself to death to save himself from hanging."

After a time, Bruno ventured to whisper to the intendant in a half-inquiring tone, that he thought the investigation had now been sufficient, and that it would be more suitable to return home.

The intendant was silent. Bruno looked at him again with that bitter expression which might also pass for sorrow.

The intendant saw Bruno's shattered condition and consented to return.

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The two friends returned to the inn, where the grooms were in waiting with the horses; one of them met the travellers some time before they reached it, and brought the tidings, that down yonder, there was a sailor, who had stated, that across there by the village — a few houses and the church tower were to

be seen from here, — the body of a woman had been recovered from the lake.

The superintendent embraced Bruno, who tottered at these tidings, as if he were on the point of falling; they sat down for a time on the spot where they had received the tidings. The groom said, that in an hour, by boat, they could reach the village named, but that by land it would be a journey of several hours.

"I cannot cross the water," said Bruno, I cannot to-day. Schöning, don't ask it of me, don't compel me. Why do you torment me so?" he exclaimed angrily.

The intendant knew that deep grief easily makes a man unreasonable; that in the deepest background of the heart there lurks a feeling of anger, even towards the most sympathising, but who still are not afflicted like ourselves.

"I take nothing amiss from you, and when you even treat me hardly, I bear it. I understand you, and I am far from wishing to persuade you to cross the lake. We will ride."

The horses were brought, and they rode to the village pointed out. They passed an inn, before the door of which under the lime-trees, waggoners, sailors, and woodcutters were drinking beer and brandy, and were laughing and jesting. It seemed to Bruno as if he were dragged over mountains and through valleys, like a person suffering from fever who only sees the world veiled in confusion, and here at the inn he panted for thirst, he would have liked to drink, it would perhaps give him new strength, aye, perhaps, better than all, forgetfulness of every thing; but he did not venture to ex-

press his desire to his friend. May a man in his condition drink brandy? A poacher, like him up yonder, may, but not a cavalier. In his heart Bruno cursed the friend, who thus prevented his drinking while his tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth, but outwardly he thanked him for taking so much trouble, for having exposed himself to so much on his account, it was what he could never forget. — Ah! how good is it that words are so ready; almost as good as that horses properly broken in keep up such a steady trot that one does not require to make any personal effort.

The friends rode rapidly. It was noon day when they reached the village, from which Hansei and his family had removed two days before. The host of the Chamois was standing at his door, and respectfully greeted the two horsemen with the groom behind them.

They alighted. Bruno threw the reins of his horse, steaming with perspiration, to the groom, and the superintendent led his friend into the front garden, where they sat down; and, he would not hear of a refusal, Bruno must have a glass of wine; the host quickly brought a bottle of sealed wine, and praised it as his best; he also brought a dish of roast meat, and placed it on the table; it was there now and must be paid for, even if it were not touched.

The superintendent took the host aside, and asked him softly if it were true, that a female body had been cast ashore here from the lake.

The host of the Chamois answered smirkingly in the affirmative. What happened in the village was not a general affair, the profits of it were his prerogative.

The superintendent asked further, where the house was, in which the body lay.

"I will take you there," said the host smiling.

"Send for the burgomaster too."

"It's not necessary, I am common councillor," replied he, going quickly into the house, and returning in his long coat and medal. The gentlemen should see, he thought, with whom they had to do, and people of quality they were too, or they wouldn't have had a groom, and they would have said, "take your meat away, we shan't pay for it." He even fancied he knew one of them.

"Pardon me," he said to the intendant, "some years ago there was a painter here, who was as like you, as if he had been your brother."

The superintendent knew that it was he himself, but he was not now inclined to enter upon any renewal of the acquaintance.

The host accompanied the strangers to Hansei's house.

On the way he said: "She was a beautiful creature, very beautiful, but terribly good for nothing. And her belongings are also good for nothing, especially her only brother."

The superintendent signed to the loquacious host that he should be silent. Bruno bit his lips till they were sore.

Near Hansei's house, in the garden, and on the road, stood a large crowd of people; it was difficult to force a way through them; women were moaning, children were crying, and men were scolding.

"Make way there!" cried the host. He stepped in advance of the two men through the crowd, and Bruno

heard them say behind him: "The handsome man there, with the large moustache, is the king."

"No, that he isn't, he's his cousin," said another.

The three entered the garden. Bruno leaned against the cherry-tree, and the superintendent signed to the host to let his companion rest a little. Bruno stood there, and the whole world seemed turning round with him. Some withered leaves fell down on him from the cherry-tree — he started at the slightest touch. At length he said in French to his friend:

"What avails it to the dead, my seeing her? And it will hurt me for ever, it will ever remain on my mind."

"My friend, you must go in! Consider, these people have made every attempt to restore the stranger from motives of pure humanity."

"One can give them money for having done so, but why should we still torment ourselves with the remains of the dead?"

But Bruno was obliged to go in. Leaning on his friend, he crossed the threshold.

There, in the entrance, lay the body of a woman. In the very place where Hansei had remembered he two days ago, black Esther now lay: her glossy black hair hung in thick skeins over her face, her mouth stood open — the last cry that Irma had heard had left its impress there.

"Esther!" cried Bruno covering his face with his black gloved hands.

"That is not your sister," said the superintendent consolingly, "come away, come!"

Bruno could not move from the spot.

"Yes — sister!" cried an old woman, who now rose up beside the corpse. "Yes — sister. Have I not told thee to do nothing to her, because she helped the beautiful lady away, else she would do herself a harm? Now thou hast it! And thou liest just in this house! Oh this house! this house! May the lake wash it away; come up, lake, take the whole house! Who are *you*? What do you want?" cried she springing up and seizing Bruno's arm. "Who art thou with the black hands? Look! . . . Is it thou? thou? — thou would'st not see thy father die — what dost thou want with my Esther? Merciful heavens — now I know that it was thou, thou! Say it was thou, — say it — don't shut your eyes, or I'll scratch them out! It is thou! — I will strike a nail into thy brain, into thy accursed brain that forgot her. Oh! why have I not known it till now? But there's time enough, my Thomas has already once had a bullet aimed at thee — and he will again . . ."

Bruno sunk fainting.

The superintendent prevented his fall, but he could not support him, and he laid him down on the same floor, on which the dead body of Esther lay.

The host of the Chamois hastened out to fetch water, and through the open door several people entered, and among them, Doctor Sixtus, the country Doctor, the lawyer, and Baum.

Sixtus brought Bruno quickly back to consciousness. Baum took a rapid survey of what had happened; he supported himself against the door post, he clenched it with his fingers, and presently glided out. He was not necessary here, and all might be lost if he now betrayed himself. He dragged himself to the

cherry tree in the garden, and kept loosening and fastening his gaiters, then he took out his watch, reckoned the seconds, wound it up quickly, held it to his ear, and played carelessly with the watch chain. He reflected and said to himself silently, that he must accomplish alone the great task which was still to be performed; he fancied he had a clue to Irma. Sixtus would not hear of it, and turned it into ridicule — so much the better, then the merit devolved on him alone; but this was not the time, now least of all, to engage the interest of the mother. His sister was dead — it was perhaps the best thing for her, and at any rate he could not bring her back again to life. He could subsequently, undiscovered, take care of the old woman.

Baum was proud of his composure, and kept stroking his chin.

Within the house, the commotion increased from moment to moment. The old woman cried and howled; she ran into the sitting-room, tore open the window and called out: "Strike him dead! drown him! he has drowned her!"

Baum let his watch drop on the seat in the garden as he heard these words. The old woman was then dragged away from the window, and Doctor Kumpfer held her.

She came back to the corpse of her daughter.

"Strike us all dead!" cried she. "There is no king on earth, and no God in heaven!"

The old woman raved, then she wept, then she called again to her child:

"Thy lips are open, say but one word, say but one yes, before these witnesses! say his name, he has

ruined thee and has let thee perish in thy misery! You don't believe me. Say," she called to the superintendent, seizing him — "say: has he not called her name, and acknowledged it? is nothing done to the man who leads a poor creature into misery and death? speak," — she added, turning to Bruno, — "here, take the ring, which your sister gave me, I want nothing from you!"

She threw herself again howling and groaning upon the corpse.

Bruno was at length led away. He looked deadly pale. His face was marked by his black gloves. They placed him upon the seat under the cherry-tree; Baumse, and brought water, and Bruno washed his face; he looked astonished at the white handkerchief, which bore the black marks from his face.

They went back to the inn. Bruno never relaxed his hold of the superintendent's hand; he was like a fearful child, at every noise he fancied that the old woman was coming to scratch out his eyes, and to tear his heart from his body. At last he composed himself, and he asked the superintendent what he had said on seeing the corpse. The superintendent replied that he had called out "Schwester!" (sister) and the old woman had understood him to say "Esther," and had grown quite frantic in consequence.

Bruno heard to his comfort that he had not betrayed himself. He set aside, however, a considerable sum for the support of the old woman, with whom Irma had found her last shelter.

"Oh! friend," said he to the superintendent, "I will never forget the image of that drowned girl, all her life."

Bruno was so exhausted, that he was unable to ride back. Dr. Sixtus' carriage was ready, he got into it with him to drive back to the capital. The physician gave Bruno the sad consolation, that Irma's body would not be found; that of the ruined girl had floated on the surface. Irma, however, — as he had presupposed — was drawn to the bottom by her long riding habit and would never be found.

As he bid him farewell, the superintendent said to Bruno:

"I have learned to know the depth of your heart!"

Bruno nodded in silence. He submitted to it, it would be well that the superintendent repeated that at court.

When they drove off, all around was veiled in rain and mist. Neither mountain nor lake was to be seen. At the very last moment before starting, Bruno called the lacquey Baum to take his red-collared cloak, for Baum was to mount Bruno's horse, and to ride it home.

The superintendent rode back accompanied by Baum. He called the lacquey to his side, instead of allowing him to follow him.

"Mr. Superintendent," said Baum, "this is a sad scene."

"Yes, terrible. I think the mother of the drowned girl is crazed."

"Sir," began Baum again, "I have something I should like to say to you. I feel as if it might still be that the countess is not drowned. The court physician has laughed at me, but I have a clue, and—"

The report of a gun was heard. Baum fell from his horse.

"I have hit thee this time!" cried a voice.

Thomas sprang out of the thicket.

"Take me," cried he, "I have done the deed."

He saw Baum's body on the ground, and he exclaimed furiously:

"I meant to shoot Bruno, and now it's thou, thou!"

"Brother! my brother!" burst forth Baum in his dying breath — "I am Wolfgang — thy brother Jangerl! — Wolfgang — Zenza, my mother"

Thomas hurried back into the thicket, and another report was heard.

The superintendent stood dismayed. The rain poured down in torrents. Baum made one more convulsive movement. Presently, laughing and jesting, a crowd of strange figures with their clothes tucked up, and curiously muffled, passed by; it was the party from the bathing place, whom they had met early that morning in the wood. The ladies hastened on terrified at the sight. The men stayed to help the superintendent. Peasants were called from the field, to convey Baum back to the village, others searched the thicket, and soon brought out the lifeless body of Thomas.

The superintendent met the lawyer in the village. He gave him a full statement of every thing, and soon the whole village was gathered round the inn. It was, however, indeed no small event, for three in one family to be lying dead at once; and that Baum had acknowledged himself at last, as Wolfgang Rauhensteiner, was a matter at which no one would confess himself astonished, all declaring that they had known him long ago, even at the time when, in attendance on the court physician, he had fetched away Walpurga.

The superintendent sat long that evening with the host of the Chamois, to whom he now discovered him-

self as the painter of long ago. The host told much of Hansei and Walpurga, it may be imagined with what spirit.

The old Zenza received the tidings with a look of stupified amazement; she did not seem rightly to understand it all. When they told her that the count had left her money, and had promised always to take care of her, she burst into a shrill laugh, and when they brought her some food, she greedily ate all that was placed before her.

Baum, Thomas, and black Esther were all buried together.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE king was at the chase, the queen was ill. Matters at the court proceeded as usual, the ladies and gentlemen dined at the marshal's table, and conversed upon indifferent subjects; they were cheerful, for it is a duty to maintain a given tone.

It was the fourth day after the fearful tidings. The court ladies were sitting after dinner under the so-called mushroom. The mushroom was a round roof grown over with vines, situated at the edge of the mountain vineyards; the roof rested on a pillar in the centre, and looked in the distance like an open umbrella or a gigantic mushroom. They were happy in being able to talk of the preparations for the betrothal of the Princess Angelica; they praised her noble qualities, although she was only a simple, modest, and good-hearted girl. They had the catechism of the

court before them, — the genealogical calendar; for a dispute had arisen, in what degree Prince Arnold was related on the grandmother's side to the ruling house. The whole conversation was however only a matter of makeshift.

They spoke of how the superintendent had returned from his journey, and no one was yet certain what adventures he had gone through; that there had been deaths by shooting and drowning, they knew, but the who and the how was still problematical.

Happily they saw the superintendent himself coming towards them. They saluted him with an acclamation of mingled fun and pity. He looked much exhausted. They offered him the most comfortable seat amongst them, and begged him to tell them everything. The superintendent felt himself flattered by this general respect, though it was offered somewhat playfully, and he was soon again the agreeable man he was wont to be; he was ready for the sake of being in favor to sacrifice every thing, and if necessary even himself.

He began by telling them of Bruno's deep sorrow, but this was not what they wanted to know. Well — since they didn't wish to hear of Bruno, he would pass him by. Then, not without a skilful arrangement of the facts, he related the terrible death of Baum, who as a true servant had to suffer death for another, and yet not undeserved; for he had denied his mother and his family, and he now fell by the hand of the brother, who immediately afterwards killed himself.

All were struck with awe, and found it very strange, that in an every-day lacquey like Baum, so much of adventure should have lurked.

"You have now seen a tragedy that has put itself on the stage," said one of the court ladies.

The superintendent knew that tragedies were no longer in favour, and agreeable as ever, he related to the letter the communications of a decorated gentleman, the highly honourable host of the Chamois, some interesting stories about Walpurga, the former nurse of the crownprince. They affected indeed — or was it really so? — utterly to forget this person, aye, scarcely to have known her — good heavens, who can observe all these subordinates? but for want of any other unprejudicial topic of conversation, they listened to the stories about Walpurga, and Schöning, adhering to the strictly credible communications of the honourable host of the Chamois — such was always his introduction — told them most amusing anecdotes of Walpurga, and her awkward dolt of a husband. The good Hansei was depicted in these stories, as such an uncouth fellow, that he could neither use hands nor feet himself, and when he had to make a reckoning, ever so small, the village schoolmaster had to be sent for. He told the story of a wager and a bed-room window, with especial gout, adding a piquant flavour to his humorous detail. The ladies tittered, and scolded the superintendent for telling such a story; but the superintendent knew right well that the more they scolded the more they liked to hear such anecdotes. They afforded the superintendent also opportunity to speak in dialect; he had just come fresh from the home of the mountain-dialect, and he possessed the talent to imitate the different voices of the peasants and peasant women who had stood that night in front of Hansei's cottage, and to introduce at the same time various pithy terms; he had

himself pleasure in casting various significant expressions amongst the ladies, so that they now and then loudly exclaimed: "Oh you horrible man! you abominable man!" One lady even pricked him with her needle, but he went on quietly telling his stories; he knew how grateful they were to him.

And little as it harmed Hansei to be spoken of as a blockhead, equally little did it harm Walpurga to be thus brought upon the stage, where even the petticoats of the peasant women are somewhat shorter than in reality. And so the superintendent — certainly with the best will, he only did it to please the ladies — imputed to Walpurga various peculiarities; indeed it had been rumoured that it was not without reason that the pastor had called her into the vestry on that first Sunday.

At length, with due caution and reservation, the superintendent informed them that Walpurga had received thousands and thousands from a certain lady, who was her friend. It was not of course to be said for what reason, but the people had purchased a large farm; they had indeed been obliged to remove, for property obtained in that way brings no honour with it, not even in the country. They were talking of it in the whole neighbourhood, and even the bailiff had confirmed it, that she had paid for the whole property in ready money, and that this had amounted to six times more than that which Walpurga, according to evidence, had received for her services.

The superintendent repeated that he was very far from intending to spread a calumny; but he wished to be interesting, and therefore he was wont to trifle with himself and others.

They were glad once to have the opportunity of seeing in its reality this everlasting so-called peasant innocence; and they only wished that the queen had also heard how her favourite from the people appeared in truth.

Care, however, seemed to be taken that she should hear of it.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE king was hunting in the highlands; he was in truth a sportsman; he would not allow the game to be driven within shot, he followed the chamois over the steepest ridge, his well-inured and elastic frame stood with ease any amount of fatigue, and his whole nature gained buoyancy and fresh vigour in the chase.

The court cavaliers had an idea that something was going on in the king's mind; the constant and almost exclusive society of Bronnen was mysterious to them.

It was known that Bronnen had declined to enter Schnabelsdorf's ministry as minister of war; now it was said that Schnabelsdorf stood at a disadvantage, for being only master of the green board, he was not able to go to the chase. Bronnen had thus for several days the king's ear.

The guns were heard on the heights, and many an animal was killed; the guns were heard in the valley, and two brothers fell in death — and in the capital, rumour roared like the sea waves. The queen heard nothing of all this; in her apartments all was

quiet, not a footstep was heard, and only now and then a gentle whisper.

The queen had read with bitter feelings the remarks in the journal on Eberhard's death, and yet it had expressed with reserve what the public voice was promulgating.

Terrible things were told of the court. It was said that the queen had lost her senses at the tidings of the death of the Countess Wildenort.

People estimated but little what lay in this report. Irma's path that night over mountain and valley was not so terrible as the queen's train of thought.

She thought on Irma — she hated and abhorred her, and yet she envied her her suicide. A queen may not kill herself; it is unheard of in history. A queen must wait until she dies slowly, and in accordance with etiquette; embalmed, as it were, while living, till she at last is dead, and even then she is not buried, no — she is placed in the vault . . . always exalted, always on the heights. Only for the sake of everything on earth, no queen who kills herself. . .

They wanted to bring the queen her child; she would not see it — Irma had kissed it. Again and again she rubbed her hand and her face; they were impure, they burned — Irma had kissed them.

All was destroyed for her; love, friendship, faith, fidelity, nature, both as it is visible to the eye and audible to the ear, the plastic arts, the arts of sound, of language — all was ruined for her; for Irma had possessed all, had enhanced all, had charmed all, and it was now a lie and a burlesque.

Suddenly the queen started up. The severe sequence of thought must drive the king to suicide. He could

not bear it, that she whom he had ruined, had still sufficient courage and rectitude not to desire to live... He could not desire to live. How would he aim his gun at an innocent animal and not at himself?

He whose name is in the mouth of thousands, and is pledged to thousands, may not lay hand on himself... But then, on the other hand, how can he do any single thing, which would be fatal to his exaltation? From whom could he now demand truth when he himself...

The queen's excitement rose almost to delirium with these thoughts.

Men said the queen was crazed — a vague feeling told them on what an abyss she stood.

She gave orders that no one should be admitted to her; she looked up smiling as she said so — she could still command, she was still obeyed... After a time, she rose and ordered that the physician should be called; he appeared at once, for he was waiting in the ante-room.

The queen told him of the confusion of her thoughts, it lightened her heart; only one thing she could not say: that she still felt how the king loved her — so far as his unsteady restless nature could attain to that which could be called love. She confessed everything to the physician, only not this — she was ashamed that she could still connect a thought of love with the king.

"Ah, friend," said she sorrowfully at last; "is there not chloroform for the soul — a drop of the waters of lethe for one single feeling of the heart? Teach me to forget myself, to be without sensibility. My thoughts kill me."

The physician's practice and science impelled him

not to deal with such matters step by step, or attempt to remedy them in detail, but to give a new tone to her whole mental system. Once the queen had learned to think otherwise, it seemed to the physician that his next step was open before him. He did not therefore console, he only led her thoughts further, endeavouring to make clear to her the basis of the actions of men. He treated it according to the great principles of that solitary philosopher, that all the doings of men are governed by the laws of nature; once one has learned to conceive and understand this, then there is no more question of forgiveness, although pardon is included in the acknowledgment of the impulse of nature.

In this mode of contemplation, Gunther was endeavouring as it were to clear away the *débris* and smoking ruins after a fire; still here and there in the process, a flame would burst forth, but it would be only occasional and partial.

The queen lamented that she saw nothing but chaos before her; she went so far as to call it a delusion to wish to be good. Gunther gave her no other consolation than that he too knew all the misery of despair; he did not show himself as one standing without in security and calling to those wrestling with the agony of death: "Come to me, it is good to be here!" He was a fellow-companion in misery. He told of the times when he not only doubted his art, and believed in no cure and no health, but when all belief in a wise system of creation had disappeared. He acted according to the principle that one ought only to point out to the despairing: "See, others have suffered like you, and they have learned to live on."

Once this consciousness has arisen in the mind of the afflicted one, he breathes again in the light for the first time, and has trod the first stage of deliverance.

"I will make you the heaviest confession of my life," said the physician.

"You?"

"There was a time when I envied the frivolous, nay the vicious; I envied them their lightness of heart; I wished to be like them. Why burden the soul, I thought, with moral considerations, when one can live so well in the enjoyment of all that which charms and allures?"

The physician paused; the queen looked at him with amazement. He continued calmly:

"I have saved myself, and in my rich experience I have found that every man, every one striving after good, has — if one may so say — a skeleton-cupboard in his soul; there is a time, a moment when he fell into sin, or was on the very point of committing a crime."

After a long silent reverie, the queen asked:

"Tell me, are there happy people in the world?"

"How does your Majesty mean?"

"I mean, are there people in whose life, inclination and destiny fully harmonize, and who are conscious of this harmony?"

"Thank you; I see you studiously aim at perfect composure in expression. You know, your Majesty, I judge a person essentially by his method of expressing himself. It is not necessary to exhibit what is called cleverness, but to set forth what one says, clearly and concisely."

The queen observed that her friend wished to lead her to general considerations and perfect self-command; smiling sadly, she asked:

"And can you give me an answer to my question?"

"I think so. Your Majesty knows the story of the shirt of the happy one?"

"Not entirely."

"Well then, in few words: a king was ill, and he could only recover if the shirt of a happy man was procured for him. They sought and sought, and at last they found an unspeakably poor, and at the same time, an unspeakably happy man, and — he had no shirt on his body. I apply the story according to my own conviction. Were I a poet, I would travel from house to house, and from town to town, and from country to country, depicting the life of men in a series of representations, pointing out: 'Look here! here is this one and that complaining, and these and those lamenting, and still they are happy, or rather they are just as much so as they can be. To every man the measure of his happiness is allotted according to the peculiarity of his nature; he feels happiness or unhappiness equally, highly or lowly, clearly or indistinctly. Poets are the happiest or the unhappiest of men, because they feel happiness or unhappiness in the highest degree. Each man has that happiness assigned him which corresponds to the necessity of his nature; and unhappiness is necessary that we may feel happiness, just as it is only out of the shadow that we perceive the light."

"You think then that all men are happy?"

"They are so in truth but not so in reality, be-

cause there is no concord between them and the necessities of their nature; and they are ever seeking their happiness in that which they have not, or rather in that which they are not."

"I do not quite comprehend that, but I will endeavour to comprehend it," replied the queen. "But tell me — can one conscious of guilt be happy also?"

"Yes, if he works and acts freely, and the consciousness of his own guilt makes him only more forgiving and more active. Your Majesty, the error, the want of uniformity or that which we call the fault of a man is either an exuberance or a deficiency, which may to a certain extent be represented as the *alto rilievo* and the *basso rilievo* of his nature. The faults of exuberance may be balanced by education and knowledge, but not those of deficiency. Most men, however, demand from their belongings, and from all whom they wish to be noble and great, that they should fill up the deficiencies of their nature. This can never be."

The queen was silent for some time. She was evidently pondering over the thoughts of her friend.

"I too have such *bas-relief* faults," said she at last; "I know it, I regard it as a punishment from God and nature, that I have been rewarded with infidelity and disregard, because I had wished to relinquish the faith of my fathers and to embrace another. I thus appeared weak and wavering to the king, and he was obliged to leave me. I wished to be faithless, and was punished with infidelity."

Thus the queen spoke and wept — she wept over herself.

Gunther remained silent and calm.

The queen had reached the second stage of perception.

"That secession in idea," began Gunther after a pause, "your Majesty knows I never approved of it; that relaxing of your former habit, was only a symptom that your Majesty felt obliged to build up anew convictions which not only harmonize with your nature, but are also the echo of your nature. Your Majesty, every candid acknowledgment, every conquest over pain, is a transformation and a remodelling of our being — a purification, as it is elsewhere called."

"I understand," replied the queen. "Yes, I should like to know the system of the universe; I should like to understand the reason in human destiny. Why was it necessary for me to experience this? Does it make me better? Does it impel me to noble actions? Had I not been far better if my life had remained untroubled? I have loved all mankind so much. Ah, it was so beautiful to know no one on earth who was an enemy to me, and still more beautiful to know no one whom I must hate and detest! And now! what am I to do? It seems to me as if at every step I must cross a threshold at which a corpse is lying. There is no free step before me on earth. You are a wise man. Help me! lead me away from these terrible thoughts."

"I am not wise; and were I so, I could not give any wisdom to you. The ancients have a legend, that one can only show the apples of the Hesperides, but cannot pluck them for others."

"Well, well! be it so. But answer me: were it not better to grow greater, nobler, stronger, in virtue and in belief in man?"

"The childhood of the soul is a happiness; candid perception is an advantage; and, as I believe, a necessary and enduring joy."

"You evade my question — you have not the key."

"I have it not. Our life is nothing but hard necessity. Humble thyself! that is — let it hail down upon thee, and stand fast! The sun will come again. We move in the orbit of our own limited law of nature in subservience to the universal one. No star revolves in the firmament for itself, or fully completes its course without deviation, the heavenly bodies around attract and repel, but it is permitted in itself to persevere. So it is also with men."

"You give remedies, and yet you trust alone to the healing powers of nature."

"Certainly, your Majesty. The law grounded in our nature helps us most."

After a time he added:

"One cannot speak to one weighed down by sorrow of fresh wanderings on the heights; one cannot invite him to them. As soon as he is recovered from the blows of fate, he will be willing; for the will is the ability shown outwardly. Now, under the first effects of the blow you have sustained, you, your Majesty, are still upheld by the invisible power of nature within you. This power of nature maintains our existence till we are again capable of life and free action. My good mother expressed this in her religious way in these words: 'May God help us till we can help ourselves.'"

"Thank you," said the queen. "Thank you," she repeated, and closed her eyes.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

ON the same morning on which the king was in his hunting-seat with Bronnen, the physician, summoned by the queen, entered her apartment. She lay on her couch, attired in white and looking pale and exhausted. She expressed how full of anger she was with herself; with the vanity and conceit with which she, a young queen, had regarded herself as good and wise, aye! even as a highly-gifted nature; she ridiculed her foolishness and vanity.

"Did you know of what was going on here?" asked the physician.

"No — I could not have believed it; and now only do I understand the terrible death of my good Eberhard. A father in such grief!"

The queen did not dwell upon this; she spoke almost to herself:

"When I recall the days, the hours in which she sang — is it possible to sing such songs, such words, of love, goodness, nobleness, and purity, and at the same time have nothing in the soul, aye! worse than nothing — falsity and hypocrisy? Every word was distorted! ought we to be princes, to place ourselves over others, to rule others, if we do not raise ourselves above them by purity and grandeur of soul? I have become a different being since yesterday. I lay in the depths of the sea, and over me passed the billows of death and despair. At now I wish to live. Tell me only how one endures

You have been now long at court, and you despise everything. Don't shake your head; I know that you despise everything! Tell me only how does one en-

ture? What does one do that one can still remain—that one can still live? You must have the mysterious remedy. Give it to me! That alone will save me.

"Your Majesty!" interrupted the physician, "you are still in a feverish and excited state of feeling."

"Really? This then is your knowledge? Princes are right when they misuse their fellow-creatures, for men, even the best, are but shadows of courtesy. Upon you I had placed the highest dependence; you were what I had highly esteemed. And what do you give me? A glove, when I wish to clasp a hand. You smile. I am not delirious, I have only awoke. I have passed through hours in which all at once the whole beautiful world—ah! it was so beautiful!—became nothing but loathsome matter and foul mouldering decay. Oh, it is terrible! I thought that there was one free man, one to whom one could say everything, from whom one could ask everything—and you are not this. All there are only title-bearing creatures on this earth; there are no human beings!"

"You shall not in vain have seized upon me," murmured Gunther, half aloud, rising at the same time.

"I did not wish to vex you!" cried the queen. "Ah! so it is, in pain and sorrow we wound our very nearest friends."

"Be calm, your Majesty!" replied Gunther, sitting down; "if there is anything good in me, I may say I am not sparing towards myself. I am hard on myself and I am so also on others."

The queen closed her eyes, but presently she looked up and said:

"I fear nothing more."

Gunther continued:

"Well then, listen to me. No imagination of a man can realize how base and miserable is the confusion of human life, but no one also can conceive how beautiful, how grand, sacred, and sublime it is in spite of this. Your Majesty! I am here in the palace, which is a world in miniature, a world in itself. Here is gathered together everything which is terrible, everything which is noble, and — the flowers blossom, and the trees grow green, and the stars shine above all. Even in the most despicable there still blooms a flower — there still shines a star. A drop falls from the clouds, it falls upon the dusty street, and dust and drop become the mire of the highway. But to the eye that sees more deeply, the drop is still pure, although divided till it is scarcely to be discerned, and so mingled with the dust as to be inseparable from it. Yet even this image does not fully suffice. No image of the senses, which is to convey to us ideas of the eternal deity, can be entirely adequate. Even in a bit of dust there is God. Only to our eye is it dust, to the eye of God it is as pure as water, and in like manner it is an abode of infinity. All the human beings who appear to you so false — all these human beings would gladly be good, if it did not cost so much trouble, and impose so many privations. Most people wish to obtain virtue, but not to earn it; they would gladly gain the great prize in the moral lottery. 'Oh! if I were only good!' said a lost creature to me one day. Your Majesty! the pure in thought will tell you that hatred and contempt are not good, for they injure the soul. The art of life is to acknowledge the base as base, but not to demean oneself by passionate

feelings against commonalty. You must remove hatred out of your heart, and be at peace in your mind. Hatred destroys the soul. You must know that crime and misdeeds, when examined by the light, are not real, they are nothing but defects; they can have a thousand sad consequences, but they themselves are non-existent; virtue alone is a reality. Place yourself on this platform, and they are only shadows which torment you."

"I see the steps," said the queen, "help me up!"

"There is only self-help. Each must learn to be his own sovereign; even the royal crown does not bestow this power. The law teaches: Thou art a sovereign, when thou dost not suffer thy soul to be filled with hatred and contempt, and thus to be deprived of the world that is given thee, be that world great or little."

"I believed too much in virtue and goodness —"

"Possibly. So long as one believes in man, one may be deceived, and despair may follow; we wish only to see, and we will only see what men are as regards us, and not what they are as regards themselves. So long as one believes in the goodness of man, we may grow perplexed in finding the reverse where we least expected it. So soon, however, as we know and perceive the divine in every one, which the possessor himself is not aware of, we are secure in a more elevated judgment, and we can estimate the world more highly."

The queen rose quickly, and extending both her hands to the physician, she exclaimed:

"You are a wonder-worker!"

"A wonder-worker? Not that, only a physician,

who has held many feverish and many death-stricken hands in his own. Yes, my medical art may be a symbol for you. We help a man, and ask not who he is, we help him at any hour of the day or night, because he needs help, — though it may be that when recovered, he may pursue his evil course. The detail is our act, the whole is our thought. We ourselves are piece-work, our doings are piece-work, the whole is God."

"I understand that, I think I can see it. But still we live in these separate parts, and how are we to bear each separate hard fate? Can we then, in a good sense, — I mean it in a good sense — be always out of ourselves?"

"I know passions and affections are not to be regulated by ideas; for they grow on a different soil, or rather they move in utterly different spheres. Your Majesty! it is only a few days ago that I closed the eyes of my old friend Eberhard. He was a man who strove after the highest, and lived in the good, alone, alienated from the world; but only rarely, and never entirely, did he succeed in regulating his nature by his ideas. In his dying hour he rose above the terrible sorrow which was burning in his heart for his child; he summoned to his aid thoughts, the result of the clear perception of his better hours, and in them he died, elevated and free. Your Majesty! you must still live and do, you must raise yourself and others. I will recall an hour to your remembrance. There, under that weeping ash, when imbued with pure humanity, you felt pity for the poor child, placed doubly helpless in the world, and you would not rob it of its mother — I appeal now to the pure and genuine spirit of that

hour. You were then great and forgiving, because you had not yourself been tried by suffering; you cast no stone at the fallen, you loved and you pardoned."

"Oh God!" cried the queen, "and what has happened to me? The woman on whose bosom my child rested, is one of the most abandoned. I had loved her like the habitant of another innocent world, and now it is plain to me, that she was the medium employed, a hypocrite without her equal, under the mask of simplicity. I had thought that in the simple rustic world, there still lived purity and truth. — All that, is now perverted and destroyed. The world of simplicity is base, aye! still baser than that of corruption."

"I am not now contending for any one in particular; I think that you are mistaken in Walpurga; but supposing that you are right, so much is still clear: that one may be educated, one may believe or not believe, in any case one may be moral or immoral, because true perception does not depend on being educated or not educated, on belief or unbelief, but alone on the purity of perception. Elevate and extend your view, and look beyond the single upon the whole; only in the whole is there reconciliation."

"I see well the point on which you are standing, but I cannot rise to it; I cannot look through your telescope, I cannot keep only in view your blue sky. I am too weak. I know well what you mean. You would say: Look over these few people, over this limited space called a kingdom, it is nothing more than some grass blades in a field, a clod in the universe."

The physician gave a nod of satisfaction, but the queen continued sadly:

"Yes, but this space and these people — they are my world. If it is not around us — is purity then mere imagination? where is it?"

"Within us," replied Gunther, "and if within us, every where, and if not within us, nowhere. He is standing on the first step whose heart is full of yearning. Yet this is not true love; one only has true love for the things of the world, and for their author God, when one desires no reciprocal love, nothing in return. We love the divine in things, which do not in themselves recognize their divinity, which are sunk and choked in impurity, — unredeemed, as the church says; this love of the divine or of eternally pure nature is the highest delight, my master has taught me this — and I have learned it in myself, and you, your Majesty, shall and can do so also. — This park belongs to you; the birds which live in it, the air and light with their creative influences, and its beauty, all these belong not to you, but equally to me and to every one. So long as one is in common possession of the world, one may lose it, but so soon as one has arrived at the pure and, as it were, juster manner of possessing it, none can take it from us. We must be strong and know that hatred is death, that love alone is life, and that according to our love, so great is the measure of the life and divinity within us."

Gunther rose, and was on the point of leaving. It was enough. The inmost thoughts of the noble lady must not be overstrained. The queen begged him however with a sign of her hand, still to remain. He sat down again. For some time there was silence in the apartment.

"You cannot think," began the queen again. "Ah!

that is one of the *façons de parler* which we have learned by heart! I mean just the contrary: you can think, what a revolution all you have said has made within me."

"I can conceive it."

"Let me only ask one thing more. On the platform on which you stand, and whither you wish to lead me, I think — no, I see — I know — that there is up there eternal peace, but it is also so solitary and cold; I have a feeling of fear, as if I were being carried in an air-balloon through a rare atmosphere, while more and more ballast were ever being thrown out. I do not know how to express it. I do not understand how one can be near people in affection, and yet thus regard them only from afar, as characters in nature's play. Up there, on your platform, every sound and every image seems to me to vanish."

"Certainly, your Majesty, there is a kingdom of thought in which hearing and seeing must cease; there is only thought, and nothing else."

"But is not that a thinking from death into life? Is that any thing else than monastic self-mortification?"

"Just the contrary. There, one loves death, or at least extols it, because after it life is to begin. I do not belong to those who deny another life; I only say with my master: 'Our knowledge is a knowledge of life and not of death,' and where my knowledge ceases, my thoughts cease. Our work and our love belong to this present life. And because God is in this world, in every thing which appears in it, and only in matter, we have therefore to liberate this divine essence in everything. The law of love is to rule. And what

the law of nature is in matter, the law of moral and of right is in man."

"I cannot reconcile myself to your splitting the divine power into such millions of parts. When a stone is shattered into splinters, every part still remains a stone; but when a flower is torn to pieces, the fragments are no longer flowers."

"Take your own image, although in truth no image suffices," said the physician. "The whole world, the firmament, and all living creatures — they are not divided, they are one, they are linked together by the one thought, — the flower out of which the idea of divinity is exhaled, and the fragrance which ascends, is in the flower and clings to it still; the works of all poets, all thinkers, and all heroes, are only streams of fragrance which float away through time and space. In the flower itself they live for ever. The eternal spirit is not divided into parts, it is as a unity in the whole world, in every being, in the cellular texture of every tree, and of every flower. He who lets his thoughts soar into infinity, sees the world as the mighty corolla from which the thought of God is exhaled."

The queen held her face for some time concealed in both her hands; Gunther left the apartment.

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE king returned from the chase. The inciting wanderings over the mountains had reanimated him, and produced a new phase of thought in his mind.

He had already learned everything which had

taken place at the lake; that was now a settled matter, he would not trouble himself with past events.

He heard that the queen had never left her apartments since the fearful tidings. He sent for the physician, who informed him of the state of the queen, and recommended great forbearance.

The king fancied he could observe a still stricter reserve than usual in the words and expression of the physician: he would gladly have asked what the queen thought, how she had met the sad intelligence, and how she had commanded herself; but it really was the duty of the physician to make a report of this himself. At last the king resolved to inquire:

"Is the queen quiet in her mind?"

"Noble and beautiful as ever," replied the physician.

"Has she been reading any thing in these days? has she had the court chaplain with her?"

"I do not know, your Majesty."

For the first time, the king was averse to the usually so convenient court regulation.

The physician ought to speak of his own accord, he ought to announce everything, he thought, and now he only gave an answer to what he was asked, and even these answers were so short.

"You too have experienced a heavy trial — you have lost an old friend in Count Eberhard," said the king.

"The dead remains to me as the living did," replied Gunther.

The king was full of anger in his heart. He had approached the man in such a friendly manner, — he had inquired after an event in his private life, and he

still remained as reserved and repelling as ever, adhering strictly to established forms.

An old aversion towards this man, who, in the midst of the excited life of the court, always observed an inflexible demeanour, was again awakened in the king. He dismissed the physician with a gracious movement of the hand, but when he had gone he looked sullenly after him.

A perception, which made his cheeks glow, determined him to another course of proceeding. It became clear to him that the essential ground of his own conduct lay in the fact that a third stood between him and his wife. This should no longer be, not even on any terms. He would make no further inquiries of the physician as to the thoughts and feelings of the queen; she should say everything to him in person and alone. He felt a deep affection for her, and he knew that he was again worthy of her, for he had conquered so much in himself.

The king sent for the mistress of the chamber to come to him. Since the sad event he had only seen men around him, before whom things of the sort may be treated more lightly, or indeed need scarcely be alluded to, now for the first time a woman again stood before him, and one who united a noble mind with the orthodoxy of court propriety. The king was dignified towards the mistress of the chamber, while in his heart he trembled.

"We have gone through a sad time," he said to her.

The mistress of the chamber understood how to turn the conversation with considerable tact from all that had happened, and to avert any explanation from the king, for it seemed to her extremely unsuitable

that his Majesty should vindicate himself or even shew himself weak and perplexed, and it was the duty of those around him to smooth over everything disagreeable as gracefully as possible.

The king observed this careful turn given to the conversation. He inquired whether the mistress of the chamber had often seen the queen during the last few days, and who was now in waiting. Countess Brinkenstein told him that she had only once been with the queen, who had expressed a wish with regard to his royal Highness the crown prince.

"Ah! how is the prince?" asked the king. During all these days he had scarcely thought of his son, and it passed through him like a new consciousness, that he had one.

"Remarkably well," replied the mistress of the chamber, and she named the court ladies and gentlemen who were now in waiting on her Majesty the queen. — No one had seen her during these days, only the gentlewoman Leoni had been constantly with her, and the physician had conversed with her for hours.

The king ordered the prince to be brought into his apartments. He kissed the boy, while the soft round little hand played with his father's face.

"You shall remember your father with respect — could I only wipe away that one reproach —" he said to himself.

As if strengthened anew by the touch of his child, he was on the point of going at once to his queen, when Schnabelsdorf was announced. The king was obliged to receive him.

The prime-minister informed him that now the result of all the elections was known; and he would hold

his position with difficulty, as the majority had declared for the opposition.

The king shrugged his shoulders and said:

"We must await the event."

Schnabelsdorf looked astonished at this indifference. What had happened?

"There is only one new election necessary," said he; "your Majesty knows that the deceased Count Eberhard Wildenort, was chosen as a deputy."

"I know — I know," said the king, "but why all this?"

Schnabelsdorf looked on the ground and continued:

"I hear that your Majesty's Adjutant General, Colonel von Bronnen, who was before proposed, will be now brought forward as a candidate."

"Bronnen will refuse to stand," said the king.

Schnabelsdorf bowed again scarcely perceptibly. He had a presentiment of what was going on.

The king permitted himself now to be informed of the most necessary matters, but he begged Schnabelsdorf to be brief.

Schnabelsdorf was brief.

The king dismissed him.

He wished Schnabelsdorf to open the new chamber. If the majority, as might be expected, were then against him, Bronnen would form a new ministry.

It was no slight struggle which the king had to make, when he allowed that which ought to have been his own independent decree, to be now represented as yielding to the popular will. But he himself recognized this as the first real token of his subjection to the law, that he should wish to find his highest glory in giving expression to the proved will of his people.

True and free, the new motto passed again before him.

He composed himself to go to the queen.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE queen had heard that the king had returned, and the composure and self-command which she had acquired seemed to have disappeared. So long as the king was actually away, she thought herself strong in the contemplation of lofty ideas, but now that he was near, she trembled in the dread of meeting him face to face; her sense of injury jarred painfully against principles scarcely fortified, and fortified with such effort.

It was already night when the queen heard her consort's voice in the ante-room; he wished to see her, he said, even if she were sleeping. He entered softly. She held her eyes closed by force and forced herself to breathe softly. It was the first dissimulation of her life; she was only feigning sleep, and how often had he who now stood before her falsely assumed the appearance of sincerity and truth. . . . Her breath came heavily. She required all her strength to keep herself calm. The horror of feigning death came over her.

She lay motionless with her hands folded, and before her stood her husband. She imagined she could feel his careful loving look — but what love and care could be here? She felt the breath from his lips; she felt how he laid his finger on her pulse, and she moved not; she felt a kiss on her hand, and still she moved not; she heard him say to Madame Leoni: "She is, thank God, quite quiet. Do not tell her that I have

been here;" she heard his words and his gentle footstep as he went out, and she moved not; and in order not to confess to the waiting woman that she had feigned, he was obliged still to appear sleeping and could know nothing of what had happened.

In the ante-room, the king said to the waiting woman Leoni:

"I thank you, dear Leoni."

"Your Majesty!" replied Frau Leoni, bowing low.

"You have in these last few days shewn fresh proofs of your attachment to the queen, and I shall not forget it in you. It is a comfort to me to know the queen is surrounded by such care. And, dear Leoni, only do all you can to procure the queen as much repose as possible, and if the queen wishes for any thing in particular, which you think the ladies of the court and the mistress of the chamber need not know about, turn to me. Has the queen spoken much during these days?"

"Oh yes, unhappily too much, that is what is just now making her so exhausted — she has talked for hours, unceasingly."

"Has she spoken so much with you?"

"Oh! no."

"With the physician then."

"Yes, pardon me, your Majesty, but I think his words consist in words."

The king remembered that Madame Leoni owed a great deal to the queen, but still more to the physician, because she had not been appointed Ayah to the crown prince, but Frau von Gerloff; he was not disposed to take advantage of this remark; he therefore only said:

"The physician, good Leoni, must be the confidant."

"Certainly, your Majesty, but our noble queen is so desponding, and so it would be better if she were cheered and induced to laugh, and not always led to converse, upon such difficult and horrible things. Your Majesty will of course not mistake me, but I should like to help our noble queen, and her only and best helper is you, your Majesty, and whoever comes between, does more harm than good."

The king grew uneasy. He had never indulged in espionage, and now when he felt himself purified and elevated, he was doubly averse to it. Nevertheless he said:

"Pray tell me, what has then happened?"

"Ah! your Majesty! I would rather die than do wrong to my royal Mistress; but I do her no wrong, of course, — it will indeed only help her."

"Confide it all to me," said the king softly, — he heard his own words unwillingly as he spoke, — "just as unworthy as it would be in you to hear and report, equally little would I ever allow it or desire it, but it is well for me to know how the queen is to be helped out of her present perplexity, and therefore I must know what is told her, and how matters are discussed."

"It is so indeed, your Majesty," replied Madame Leoni — and after having again made an apology especially for the ugly words she was about to repeat she informed him how the physician had spoken of the origin of the mud in the streets, how a pure drop from the clouds of heaven mingles with the dust in the highway, and that then they had talked of sculpture of high relief, and low relief.

Fran Leoni could only give an unconnected statement, but the king knew enough.

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

The following morning, the king sent a message to his consort that he wished to speak to her.

He hastened to her.

They were both alone in the apartment.

The king advanced as if to embrace his wife.

She begged him to be seated.

"As you will," he said in a gentle tone; he was resolved to win her whole soul anew in sincerity and love.

"Will you speak first or shall I?" asked he after time.

She was startled at the sound of his voice. She saw his fresh appearance, and grew still paler. She laid her hand on her heart — she could not yet speak.

"Well then, let me speak. Matilda, we have won each other in sincere love. I acknowledge openly that I have heavily erred, against you and others. Now I beg you, believe in my thorough conversion and be free of little faith in your view of me."

"Not faithless! Ah yes, I know it! With your large views, morality is only narrow mindedness; your large soft hearts are world-embracing, and I am a circumscribed nature, ah! so circumscribed!"

"Matilda, do not speak thus, I did not mean to wound you."

"Oh! no. — You did not mean to wound me, certainly not, never —"

"Matilda, this is not the tone, in which we shall

arrive again at perfect harmony. Demand anything from me as a token of my conversion. You are right. I swear to thee —”

“Swear not! I pity you. You have nothing by which you can swear. Swear by the head of your child — by the cradle of this child you have exchanged words and looks of infidelity —”

“The future shall make all the past forgotten.”

“Well — issue a royal edict: The world and my consort above all, are to forget, that ever a Countess Irma lived! Such is my royal will!” —

The king looked with astonishment at his wife. Was this that tender sensitive being? what had she become?

“Let the dead rest,” he broke out at last.

“But the dead do not let us rest. She is looking at me in your eye, she is speaking to me in your lips, she is touching me with your hand, for your hand, your lips, your eye, were hers.”

“I will go away, till you are calm again.”

“No — remain, I am calm. But perhaps you do not wish to hear me?”

“I will hear,” said the king sitting down again. “Speak.” —

“Well then, — know, you have desolated a sanctuary, in which you stood as one worshipped, more noble and beautiful than any on earth. I may say so now, for the temple is no more and you are no longer within it. I wished to be one with you, in everything in every breath, in every word, in every look; in raising our eyes to the Eternal, our glance ought to

have been one. Hence I wished to sacrifice my creed —”

“Do you wish to bring that to account? Then consider: the sacrifice which you wished to bring me, I did not desire; it would have been a burden to me. A sacrifice is not the question here.”

“Well — I will think no more of it. I only wish to tell you that that which I regarded as a sacrifice, became a weakness in your sight. I will not speak any more of it. But you have broken the bond of fidelity, — in your intercourse with my friend, with her whom I regarded as such. I know how it is in the world. The Steigeneck whom your father —”

“Insult not my father! You may say to me what you will — only insult not my father.”

“I do not insult him, I honour him. He was moral and pure compared with you, he was far from lattery, lying, dissimulation, and treachery.”

“Who is speaking?” — interrupted the king. “Is his my consort, is this a queen that speaks such words?”

“They are not my words, they ought not to be so, you have forced them upon me. Still — let us not dispute about words. Your father bestowed his affections on a stranger, who lived outside, whom his wife did not know — that is morality and virtue compared with your conduct You broke fidelity in intercourse with my friend, with her who was hourly at my side. We spoke and thought in common, of God, of love, of the stars, of the trees and mountains and valleys, we looked together at the works of art, we sang and played, — and all this you could both do at my side, entering into the innermost sanctuary of all

higher life You have made all desolate to me, the sky, the earth, all the highest thoughts of the heart, all the purest words of the lips. I should like to know the day when you both ventured to begin to play your false game with look and word. With every kiss you gave her, you must always have said: Ah! my wife — how unhappy I am — she is so weak — oh so weak — nothing noble . . . Don't speak! of this I am sure, never can a husband or a wife touch the hand of another in love, without feeling at the same time, 'I am miserable'! — What I now say to you is not uttered in hatred and revenge, it is only justice that calls it forth. While I still loved you, I could have hated you. Now I only judge you. You must bear the consequences of your own action. That is justice. — I bewail and pity your lot. How will you ever delight in the forest — when one laden with guilt, because of you, fled through the forest to death! How will you again refresh your eyes on the lake — where in its depths, fearful sin has sunk her? — The whole world is annihilated to you. Poor man! The pen must tremble in your hand when you have in future to sign a sentence of death — you have yourself killed both dead and living. Write 'pardon!' Who will pardon you, you 'By the grace of God?'"

"Matilda, I had believed that all unseemliness would have been impossible to you, even in word."

"Have you believed so? and what do you call unseemly for yourself?"

"Say on! say on!" said the king, as the queen now paused, and drew a deep breath; he saw the fire that was consuming his dearest aspirations, and he saw too the beauty of the flame. So wonderful is the double

grasp of the human mind, that suddenly in the midst of his agitation and confusion the king felt gratified at the thought of what a power dwelt within his wife; he had never surmised it, she was greater and more powerful than he had believed, and in this appeal there lay something like a tone of acknowledged consciousness of her superior power. This excited the queen's anger doubly. With constrained calmness, she therefore continued:

"One cannot demand from any one, from any prince or from you, that you should be a genius; but that you should be an upright man, husband, and father — that any one can demand from you; you can be so as well as any peasant or day-labourer."

Pain and deep indignation were depicted on the king's countenance.

"Matilda," he began at length in a tremulous voice, "Matilda, consider well, — I am not speaking of what you do to me — only consider what you are doing to yourself by these words!"

"To myself? I have considered, I know all the thousand little joys of life are from henceforth taken from me. I shall bear an eternal burden which only death can remove. I know this. But I have also no pity for myself. When love is dead, justice must rule!"

"The love which could die was no love."

"Do not let us dispute, we understand each other no longer. Hear but this one inviolable word! What remains to me? To be despicable myself, or to despise you! Here I stand," she drew herself up so that she appeared taller, and a dark flush of red overspread her face, "here I stand and pronounce the words: I

despise you! — I will live with you, by your side, so long as life is in this body — but I despise you. Know this! And now go! I will appear with you this evening at the court festival — you shall not have to complain of any want of form. I have once wholly loved you — that remains mine, you need it not.”

The king rose. He wished to speak, but it was long before he could utter a word.

“Does any one know of your sentiments towards me?” he asked at last in a hoarse voice.

“No. We owe it to our son that no one should know.”

“Matilda, I could never have thought that you could have spoken thus with me. This does not come from you. Another has passed between us. Who has taught you to be and to speak thus?”

“You yourself are my great teacher. You have taught me hatred instead of love, and contempt instead of adoration.”

“Does your friend the physician know nothing of what you are here inflicting on me?”

“I cannot swear to you. You can no longer appreciate an oath. But this I say, that if Gunther knew that I allowed myself to be carried away by the passion of my past love for you — if he knew this, it would deeply pain him; for anger, hatred, and revenge are foreign to his great nature.”

“This great nature can be made small!”

“You will — oh! you will not deprive me of my only friend? I conjure you, I will beg you for nothing more all my life, I will obey you, and be subject to you, — love I can no longer offer to you — I beg

you only for this one thing: Leave me my only friend!"

"Only friend? I do not know this title. So far as I know, it is no office at court."

"I will beg you on my knees, injure him not. Leave him to me. He is great, pure, and elevated, it is he who holds me still to life."

The queen was about to throw herself on her knees before the king. The king touched her — she started and drew herself up.

"Be proud!" exclaimed the king. "Be so! Bear the consequences! Be the elevated one, the pure drop from the clouds of heaven, united with me, the dust of the highway — the pure and the impure."

The queen looked up confounded. What was it she heard? The words of her noble friend thus reported and distorted? She felt giddy.

"Be what you will!" continued the king. "Be alone and seek support in yourself."

He pulled at the betrothal ring on his finger. The ring was difficult to draw off, and the king's whole face grew red as he pulled it with force. At last he drew it over his knuckle. Without saying a word more, he laid the betrothal ring on the table in front of the queen.

He walked to the door, then he stood for a second still, as if listening; silently she was calling to him, and he was calling to her, one redeeming word of rescue from the depths of the heart.

The queen looked after him. Would he not turn round? Would he not once more call to her in his heart-piercing voice: Pardon me?" The love which

still lived within her was on the point of impelling her forwards after him. It was but for a moment that the king paused, and the queen involuntarily stretched forward her arms towards him — the moment vanished, and the king left.

The queen walked to the portière and stared fixedly at it. Then she sank back on the sofa and wept. She wept for some time.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

THE queen was now doubly unhappy; she felt an unspeakable grief for her lost love, and she had moreover allowed herself to give way to wicked and hateful passion. That sense of elevated freedom which she had felt after Gunther's appeal, had passed away. And now, when the heart-breaking separation was accomplished, it was as with the occurrence of a death which one has foreseen, all previous preparation is of little avail — the realized fact brings with it new and unforeboded sorrow.

The queen went to the apartments of the crown prince. She passed by the king's cabinet. She paused for a moment. How would it be, were she now to enter, and clasp him in her arms and say: "It shall all be forgotten. You too are unhappy, and I will help you to bear it?"

She passed by; she feared to appear again only as weak and tender-hearted, and she wished to be strong.

When she saw her child, her eye beamed again. The child had not seen its mother while weeping and wrestling with her sorrow; now she was again with him. A voice which she scarcely allowed herself to hear, whispered to her that he too would now come here. She trembled. She heard that the king had already had the prince brought to his own apartments.

She waited long, then she kissed the boy's little hand, and often looked round to see if his father were not coming.

He came not.

The king sat in his cabinet and held his burning brow. He had reached a decided turning-point in his life, and now he ought not to be oppressed with personal misery. He had repented, that was now enough. He had resolved to change, that was more than enough. What was the use of these accusations and reproofs? A feeling of deep anger with his wife arose in his mind. She was narrow-minded and revengeful — no, not narrow! There was a power in her which he had never surmised. He felt deeply the heavy sin of having deceived such a wife. There was still something within him which prompted him to regard her reproofs as an offence against his high position. And amid these ruins of his domestic existence, how was he now to exercise that self-denial, and to remodel his life completely? Only a heart reconciled and satisfied in itself can exert a reconciling and satisfying influence. Scorn and sadness were almost persuading him to relax in the change he had begun, since it had not been justly acknowledged by his nearest — his wife.

Thus he sat for some time in a dull heavy mood.

At last he stood up erect, with an expression of defiance and firmness on his face. He was resolved to accomplish the good without appreciation, ay! even while mis-appreciated; the best powers of his nature rose victoriously from the struggle. In his own strength and for the sake of his own honour, he would execute what he considered to be right, and this happiness must be his compensation for his lost happiness of love. . .

There were great festivities in the evening.

The betrothal of Princess Angelica with Prince Arnold was officially celebrated.

The queen appeared on the arm of her consort, greeting all assembled in a gentle kindly manner. She looked fatigued, but not the less beautiful.

No one saw anything of the division between the royal pair, and equally little was the want of the ring on the king's hand observable to any one. The king, with great self-command, spoke confidentially with the queen, and she answered in the same manner.

Often, however, it seemed to her as if she must ask him: "Has nothing then occurred?"

Then she would look round again fearfully in the large salons, as if suddenly Irma's shadow must appear, snow-white, in wet garments.

When the king, with his consort on his arm, had completed the round of the salons, he greeted Bronnen with especial warmth, and remained some time in lively conversation with him.

The queen saw it with astonishment. She knew that in secret Bronnen had admired Irma, and had even sought her hand. What had happened that the

king should be on such friendly terms with this man, and should distinguish him before the whole court? There was no opportunity for gaining intelligence on this point.

The whole summer palace was illuminated, variegated lamps were burning on the terrace, pans containing lighted pitch were placed in the park, casting their brightness into the autumn night, the band of Prince Arnold's regiment played merry airs, and the glow of lights and the sounds of music penetrated far into the valley and up the mountains, on whose solitary heights there were human habitations.

The queen met the physician, but she spoke only a few hasty words with him. The king gave him a friendly salutation as he passed by.

He will not inflict that on me, thought the queen. There was something of peculiar shyness in her look, when her eye fell upon the physician; the king observed it once, and he nodded silently. The queen had felt that Gunther must be dissatisfied with her, for she had not abided by the laws set forth in his doctrines.

The day following, a report spread through the capital, that the physician had received his dismissal.

The gazette in the evening which contained the account of the betrothal festivities, announced that his Majesty the king had been graciously pleased to accept the resignation of the Privy Counsellor Gunther, as royal physician in ordinary, and that as a token of his satisfaction he had bestowed on him the cross of the — order.

Among the private notices there stood:

"I bid farewell to all friends. I am retiring to my native town —, in the mountains,

"Dr. William Gunther,
"Privy Counsellor and late Physician in Ordinary
"to his Majesty the King."

BY A SOLITARY WORLDLING.



SEVENTH BOOK.

(IRMA'S JOURNAL.)

CAST back on the shore — what shall I now do? Merely live because I am not dead?

For days and nights this unsolved question kept me as if hovering between heaven and earth, just as in that terrible moment when I glided down from the rock.

I have now solved the question.

I will work.

I will note down what becomes of me. It lightens my burden while I record things.

I was ill, in a fever, they say. And now I will work.

I informed the grandmother of all I knew how to do. I can apply none of it here. She took me into the garden; we gathered together the apples which Uncle Peter shook down from the tree. Then the old resident came who lives over me, and he called out angrily that a certain quantity of the apples belonged to him. He looked for an apple, and wanted to taste and see which tree had now been shaken. I handed him an apple, and explained that I lived under him.

While we were thus in the garden, a man came who wished to buy of Hansei two maple-trees standing by the cross-road, for wood-carving. This appeared to me like a gleam of deliverance. I told the grand-

mother that I understood how to mould figures in clay, and that I could easily learn wood-carving. I am now a pupil in the workshop.

Now on the first free Sunday, while all are in church, I am writing this.

I know a man who had already knelt down on the heap of sand, and the muskets were already aimed at him, and — he was pardoned. I have often seen him. Had I but asked him, how he lived on.

I have no mirror in my room; I have resolved never to see myself again.

And since I have no mirror, and will have none, these pages shall be a mirror for my soul.

Oh, this repose! this loneliness! Rising as it were from the lake to breathe again. Oh, the repose, the stillness of my present life!

Up here and in thousands of places on the earth there was this same repose, while down below I was on the point of doing a terrible act.

I have just come from the workshop. Often, when we drove from the summer palace into the country through industrious villages, we have stopped and visited the large workshops, and have had the things shown us. I used to be ashamed then — ah! how long it is ago! — that we only looked at the work for a time, and then got into the carriage again, leaving the men there to continue their labour. With what thoughts must they have looked at us, as we got into the carriage?

I am now myself at the work-board.

Why has no religion this command before all others: Thou shalt work?

They say that when a wound is sucked by loving lips, it heals quickly. Oh, thou who art called "Queen," I would like to suck up the blood that trickles from thy heart!

Have I destroyed the letter to the queen or did it reach her?

It startled me deeply when the grandmother asked me why I had pained the queen by informing her, of my design.

Why did I do so? I know of no *why*. I only know that I felt it necessary, as the last self-executing act of truth.

Why does it signify to us what they think of us after death, when our being has become only an empty sound?

Heavy, painful days.

I felt it a duty to write to the queen from my place of concealment. The brother of the grandmother, a true-hearted and willing little man, who always places himself at my disposal, and is glad to show me a kindness every minute, declared himself ready to carry my letter to a distant town. The queen ought not to grieve for me, at least not for my death, and she ought to know that I expiate my sin, and that I expiate in life. If I only knew whether I really burnt the letters, or whether they really reached him and her . . . To him I have nothing more to say. The good mother saw that something was passing in my

mind, which I had not communicated to her. She often came to me, but she never asked. At last I could bear it no longer, and I told her my resolve. She took me by the hand and said — when she intends to say anything fully to me, she always takes my hand; she must hold me bodily — “Child, you must only make it clear to yourself what you wish to do. At the bottom of your heart, wouldn’t you like better to be discovered? Ask your own conscience.”

I started. It is true. I do not want to do anything, but if it happened . . .

“Don’t give me any answer,” continued the mother; “give it to yourself, and ask yourself besides, whether the day after to-morrow, if you were there where you used to be, you would not wish to be away again. But this I do say to you — whatever you wish to do, that do thoroughly. Either don’t write to the queen at all, and let her mourn; it is better to mourn for the dead than for one whom one has lost and who still lives. Or do the other thing, write to her honestly and straightforwardly: ‘Here I am!’ As I said just now, whatever you wish to do, do it thoroughly. Oh child!” she added, “I fear it is with you as it is with the poor soul. Do you know the story of the poor soul?”

“No.”

“Then I will tell you it. There was once a young girl who having gone astray and died early, got into hell, and there the holy Peter kept hearing her crying out of the flames: ‘Paul! Paul!’ and that so touchingly, that the worst devil could not have ridiculed it. So one day the holy Peter went to the gate of hell, and asked: ‘Child, why are you always crying Paul!’

Paul! and that so miserably?' So the maiden said: 'Ah, dear holy Peter, what are all the torments of hell? Nothing at all! My Paul suffers much more. How will he endure without me? I pray you only for one thing: suffer me once more to go upon the earth, and let me see for one moment how it fares with him. I will then gladly remain here in hell a hundred years longer.'

"A hundred years?' said the holy Peter; 'consider, child, that is a long time?'

"Not to me; oh, I pray you, I pray you, let me only once more look on my Paul on earth; and I will then certainly be quiet, and take everything patiently.'

"The holy Peter resisted long, but the poor soul gave him no rest, so at last he said: 'Well, for aught I care, go; but you will repent it.'

"And so the poor soul went on earth to her Paul. And when she got there, she saw Paul, and he was merry with others; and so the poor soul went quietly back again to eternity, and only nodded calmly and said: 'I will now go back to hell, and will expiate.' And then the holy Peter said to her: 'The hundred years which thou hast promised are forgiven thee; in one minute thou hast gone through more than in a hundred years of hell.'

"That is the story of the poor soul."

I thirst for some spring outside me, where I could drink and be free; I yearn for music, for faith, for some soul-freeing dedication of myself. I find it not. I must find the spring within me.

Often in moments of the deepest grief it seems to me as if I had not lived all this myself; I go my way,

and it seems as if some one were telling me the story of another.

For the first time in my life I have the feeling of being borne with and favoured. I ought really not to be here; I am eating the bread of charity. I know now how the poor homeless ones must feel. Hansei could, if he chose, send me any day out of the house, and then what would become of me?

That I must eat in the society of my hospitable friends, is painful to me. But I am more sorry for Hansei than for any. He has a strange apparition sitting at his board, whom he does not know. I am an interruption to his happiness.

I have punctured my hand with the gimlet, because I am thinking too much of other things while I am working.

My little pitch-man has spread a salve for me.

Wood is only a make-shift material; it is difficult to make it obey the designs of art; it is inflexible stubborn stuff. Antique forms of beauty are not to be worked in wood.

"Oh! to live up here! — that must be glorious!" How often is this exclaimed in country parties. But we forget that the mood in country parties and that where we live, are two very different things.

It is otherwise when the wind whistles over the stubble-fields, and rages among the trees of the bare forest; when a sluggish mist creeps over the mountains; when the clouds hang for days upon the heights

and only now and then some summit peeps forth like a phantom, and is again hidden; when one is awake by the stormy wind in the night, and day never comes at all. Yes, you lovers of country parties, with your fresh garlands on your hats, be up here for weeks without a sofa, without fresh bread — without a sofa — only think of that!

Solitude with happy cheering reflections, must be peaceful and blessed; it is a solitude like that of the tree, which shoots down its roots through the sappy earth to some fresh stream in the valley; but solitude with sad shadowy reflections, is the solitude of the tree, whose roots ever strike against rocks; it is obliged to pass over them with its roots, to twine around them, and to bear for ever — a heavy stone in the heart of them.

The best loneliness is when no human eye has rested on our face for a whole day. To know that no human eye has seen thee, that the mirror of thy countenance is pure, unbreathed upon — that is good.

Being alone makes one easily superstitious. One wants to lean on something, to take hold of something, which is beyond us.

Of a morning, when any instrument falls from my hand when I begin to use it, I am frightened; it seems as if it would be a bad difficult day, which begins thus. I fight against this superstitious feeling.

Being alone when one's belief is firm, is not to be alone.

My master is constantly out of humour. His wife and his three daughters assist in the work. Hansei has lent me the money for my lessons. I learn quickly.

I observe — and the little pitchman has betrayed it to me, that Hansei has circulated this protecting mystery concerning me — that I am regarded by the people here as somewhat demented. This gives me freedom and protects me; but sometimes I feel uneasy at it.

My master too thinks that I am crazed. He speaks cautiously with me, and is delighted when I understand anything.

The swallows are going away. Oh! I cannot deny, that I am fearful about the winter. If only I am not ill. That were terrible! Then I should be obliged to betray myself or I dare not be ill! But I am still so excitable. It is difficult for me to say it, but it is also difficult to bear it: a cow in the next stall has a bell on her neck, and day and night it keeps sounding so inharmoniously. I must get accustomed to it.

I have a perfect dread of the winter. If it only were not autumn now, if it were but spring! Nature would be my friend. Nature is the same everywhere. But winter is now before me! I must grow reconciled to it; we human beings don't make the seasons for ourselves. I will see which is the stronger, my nature or my power of will. I will allow my mind to think of nothing else, but what it ought to think of.

I will.

The shoemaker will recognise Cinderella by her foot; he finds my foot unusually small for a peasant girl.

I hope the fairy tale will remain a fairy tale.

All to-day, that touching air from Isouard's Cinderella is in my mind, with the words:

"Good child, thou must contented be,
A better lot's assigned to thee."

How simple the words are. But the music is the fairy, which invests the simple syllables with royal grace, and causes them to be enthroned on the lips of all men.

Oh happy nursery tale! Thou ask'st not, how the princess lived as poultry maid. Thy imagination pronounces its creative fiat, and behold, it is so.

But in actual life, such transformations are heavy trouble.

Walpurga has hit my condition aright. She said to-day:

"It is almost the same to you here, as it was to me in the palace. You, too, can't grow reconciled to everything. But truly, one gets easier accustomed to a silken bed, than to a sack of leaves."

"And if one wants to go home again, one takes it all easier too," I should like to have said; but I repressed it. One mustn't torment these people with logical reasonings; their thoughts and feelings are like the song of the birds, without rhythm, at best like the national song, the air of which concludes with the third, and not with the key-note.

That I could at any time join the alluring, glitter-

ing, and sparkling world, gives me courage not to desire it, and also not to miss it.

Had I gone into a convent and lived there, fettered, constrained by a vow, under outward compulsion, — I know, I should have mourned away my days at the grating.

Without gloves! I had no idea that one's hands could freeze so. I don't understand it at all, being without gloves. That day, that he drew off my glove, a shudder passed through me — did my heart feel a presentiment? —

In the morning I miss a thousand trifles; I did not know, that I had them.

I learn the things of everyday life from the good mother. It is just the most everyday things that we do not learn. We learn to dance, before we are really able to walk.

Oh! how many things, how many serving hands does man need, from the shoe-cleaning of the morning to the lighting and extinguishing of the lamp in the evening. While engaged in nothing but cooking and washing and scouring, and fetching of water and carrying of wood, while busy with all these thousand and one things, man never comes to himself. The beast's clothes grow and his food grows; man must spin and cook.

I have imposed on myself the heavy task of not allowing myself to be waited on in anything. An anchorite ought not to be fine, nor dainty in eating. I am not suited for one.

It has heavily oppressed me but now I am proud of having become a Robinson Crusoe in spirit.

Every man, who comes to himself, and can live contrary to established custom, is cast away upon a desert island, and must create everything anew for himself.

But why must I, when inwardly so overburdened, have suffered shipwreck?

When I look out thus into the night, all is dark, there is no light to show me anywhere, that there are human beings like myself. — Everything is awful and fearful to me, I feel as if I were alone in the world.

(October). This evening — ah, the evenings are already long — it suddenly came into my mind: Thousands are living in the civilized world in ease and pleasure, who —

Why shall I alone resign, and be deprived of all, and bury myself in solitude?

Because I must and will. My existence is only one of favour and charity. I have forfeited my life, ay, forfeited it; that is it. Shall I gain it anew in better earnestness? Words, with which I once trifled, are now fetters and judges me.

“You have loaded yourself too heavily,” said the grandmother to me.”

“How so?”

“See, one can’t grease a heavily-laden waggon, that its wheels shouldn’t groan and creak; one has to wait till the waggon is empty again, then it can be

raised with a pulley, the wheels taken off, and the axle greased. You are still loaded with the heavy burdens of your reflections; take them off, and you will see how we ease them."

I now know, why I get up. Something calls to me, you must work! To-day this is finished, to-morrow that, and when I lie down to rest, there is something more done in the world than there was at day-break.

Work! work! that is the watchword here. Daily, hourly. Men think of nothing at all but labour, or "work" as they call it. Labour is a necessity of their nature, just as growth is to the tree.

There is misery and division even here.

Walpurga, in her good nature, said that she could not bear that the old blind resident should live so alone, and that she wished to have him at their meals.

"I can't stand that," said Hansei. "Not a word of it, I can't stand that."

"Why not?"

"Why? You ought to know that yourself. If Jochem once comes to our meals, one can't do away with him again; it's better therefore, not to have him at all. And you don't know how a blind old man eats."

After this, we sat silent at dinner, not a word more was spoken. Walpurga seemed to be eating, but in reality she was only swallowing her tears, and soon rose from table. She feels this roughness and

hard-heartedness deeply, but she doesn't complain, not even to me.

(In a violent storm of wind.) How startled I have been to-day! My little pitch friend told me, that a man had hanged himself in the neighbourhood.

"It must have been thus," he said, "the man had once hanged himself fifteen years ago, but he was cut down, and he lived, but it was as if he had a rope round his neck — when any one has once had such a design, he never dies a natural death."

How it has startled me!

Is the terrible lot then appointed for me?

No. I will not.

To look out from the warm room into the snow storm — it is like looking back into the confusion of the big world.

It is already my ninth week here.

There is still a deadness within me, as if my brain had been struck with a hammer. I only exist. But I am already beginning to rouse myself. When I wake in the morning, I am obliged to consider, who I am and where I am. I have to recall all my misery. But then work summons me away.

I have nothing more to expect from the world without, and nothing more from to-morrow. All that I now have must be from myself, and all must belong to to-day. The streets are closed to me, there is no more post for me, no letters, no books, nothing at all. To get up in the morning, and to know that no news can come from without, announcing happiness or un-

happiness to me, to know that I am shut out from all, and from the everlasting law of nature — he who could arrive at this personality, at this solitude in the universe, would be none other than that child, painted by Correggio, who is shining with his own radiance.

Hammer and axe, file and saw, and all that once appeared to me as torture instruments for poor enslaved humanity, these are the instruments of my deliverance. They chase the demons from the brain; where these tools are wielded, and the hand works vigorously, evil spirits cannot tarry.

That Redeemer is yet to come, who will consecrate labour and the working day.

I now see that I must renounce the idea of artistic employment, and must be moderate in my aims.

Wood is useful for so many things and is a necessary, and it will not allow itself to be applied to free independent beauty. As a material for my art, or rather for my handicraft, it ever remains inadequate, and can only appear for decorative purposes. Bronze and marble speak a universal language; a carving in wood has in it something provincial, it always speaks in dialect and never comes to the full transparent expression of the highest idea. We can imitate in wood, animals and plants with which our eyes are familiar, and angels even in relieve; but busts as large as life or the whole human figure in wood — that doesn't do.

Woodcutting is only the beginning of the art, it remains faltering in its expression, or at the best, monotonous. Whatever had once an organic appearance, as a tree, cannot be transformed into an artificial organic

structure. It is only from stone and bronze that man first receives an appearance of organical structure.

Oh, our horrible images of the saints! If a Greek of Pericles' time could see them, he would shudder at us barbarians.

This journal is a comfort to me. In it I can speak my own language, I come home to myself.

This constant talking in dialect — I seem to myself so affected, and all that I say, appears to me so distorted. I am as it were wearing a foreign dress; over the face of my soul, an iron mask is forged. I am a child of the mountains, and yet I hear myself as a stranger. Dialect is a poorness of intellect — a poor instrument, a drum on which no concert piece can be played, or still better: — the language of Lessing and Goethe is the beautifully winged butterfly, leaving the chrysalis to which it can never again return.

Alas! In everything, the terrible remembrance meets me. I have offended you, I have denied you, you the genii of my people, the genii of humanity. You have fostered me, and I have desecrated all culture. I must live in exile.

There is a fire still smouldering at my heart; it burns. It must be extinguished.

My heart is so heavy; it seems to draw me deeper down, as if weights were hanging to me.

I am so weary, so harassed and weary, that I feel as if my limbs must break under me; I should like always to sleep, only to sleep.

I should like to go on a pilgrimage to some place, to some being, and make atonement.

I now understand the basis of a visible religion.

I will go away, to Italy, to Spain, to Paris, to the East, to America. I will go to Rome, I will become an artist, I must be one. If I am still to live on the wide world, I will have it entirely, I will renounce nothing, I am not of a renouncing nature. I can dash to the ground the full cup of life; but to see it before me and languish and mortify myself, and bind my hands, that I cannot do. I will, I must away. Something calls me. Naples lies spread out before me, a villa on the shore, brilliant days on the sea, laughing, singing, and gaily clad people — I must rush into the stream of life. It is better than into that of death. And yet — I can not

A horrible twilight hour! Something within calls me to turn back, and tells me that the whole world is mine; what has happened? Do not thousands live, thousands like me — in honour and self-forgetfulness? What is it that whispers within me: thou must expiate thy guilt? I can step forth, as if nothing had happened. It was a piquant adventure. I disappeared for a few weeks I must only be bold the glittering equipage will drive along, every one will greet me, I shall be regarded as beautiful, no one will see the writing on my brow, when a diadem is glittering there

There stand the glaring words I have written . . . it seems to me as if I had my soul before me

There is a childhood of the soul, I feel it in the grandmother, with all her solid experience.

Oh! could I but gain this childlike feeling. But has not he who seeks it, for ever lost it?

The old Jochem often brings me his money; I am to count it over to him, every piece separately. He asserts that one is so imposed upon with money.

My little pitch-man says, that peasants almost always treat their aged parents hardly, and then he asks me: "Why must Jochem live so long, and he has nothing on earth but hate and mistrust?" I know of no answer!

Old Jochem is a true peasant-Lear, but because he can complain at the court of justice and has complained, his fate is not purely tragic.

A king however has no court of justice, at which he can complain, he desires none; hence his fate is great and tragic.

My friend! When thou stand'st in judgment before thyself, call me, no one can accuse thee as I can, and I accuse thee not, only myself. . . . And I expiate my guilt.

The open fire on the hearth affords me happy hours. How beautiful the fire is! What are all jewels compared with it? My poor blind man, he cannot see the fire. In every house, the fire is the most beautiful thing — man ought to worship the fire.

"You've now had a good thought," said Hansei to me, as I was sitting to-day by the open window. "You've been pondering something good," he added. He evidently longed to ask me, but he adheres strictly

to his resolution; he never asks me anything, he put everything in another form. I told him my thoughts. His manner seemed to say in reply: "It isn't worth the trouble to think that."

"Yes, by the fire here," said Hansei at last, "it's true, one's thoughts go roaming."

The most objectionable thing in the world to Hansei is to take a walk. To move about in the world, where one has nothing to seek and nothing to do, — is inconceivable to him; he cannot comprehend why one does not prefer to lie down on the long seat and sleep.

Bronnen's voice coming from his broad full chest always reminds me of the good Kent, and in his youth Kent must have looked like Bronnen.

A procession of figures moves before my memory. The queen and Bronnen alone are ever present with me. The king vanished with my past, and is expunged from my remembrance; in my dreams, many visit me still, he alone never. It is a riddle to me — I cannot solve it.

When one meditates in solitude, so much decreases in value, and human beings among the rest. The physician was no more to me personally than to another; Emmy was only an echo.

When one thus reckons over, one possesses but little, and I too have left but little behind me in the world.

The sledge bells are now the only sound heard there is great work going on in the forest. Snow and ice, generally so pathless, form highways here on the mountains.

Work transfers our vital energies to others. My vital energies go out into the world through my work. The productions of my art are dispersed abroad, and I can still be solitary, alone, concealed.

The work of man goes from him. I think I have once read the idea in Ottilia's journal.

The dog is man's friend and confidant in solitude. One learns, in the desolation out here, to love his fidelity and watchfulness; a sound reverberates over the mountains, and of every new occurrence notice is given by a bark.

When the dog in the courtyard barks, I often spring to the window — it may be some stranger coming, who knows, *who*.

Suppose the intendant were to come, or still better the physician, and were to recall me, and take me back!

I tremble.

Must I obey such a call?

To have once been on the extreme brink of death, only one step more, and a leap this makes life easier. No more unhappiness can now befall me.

And yet — if that life were to hold me fast again

I am an ant, dragging along its pine leaves.

I am not yet wholly destitute. I bear within me pictures and melodies, and above all my memory has preserved songs of Göthe's, among others:

On every height there lies repose.

This has passed a hundred times through my mind, and has refreshed me like cooling dew. I delight in the melodious cadence, and the simple words.

I could not rest till I had repeated that song to some one. I told it to the old resident, who understood it, and the little pitch-man has already learned it by heart. How happy is a poet! An hour of his life, becomes everlasting life to thousands after him. How I delight in this precious remembrance! I am like the old resident, who learned a couple of songs and sings them quietly to himself.

Even the old resident is growing honourable in my eyes.

Early this morning, he came to me, dressed in Sunday attire, with the medal of the wars of freedom, on his breast, and he said with a certain air of enthusiasm: "There's a mass read for me in the church to-day. I was in Napoleon's service, and the king was then on his side too. It was in the year 9, three o'clock in the afternoon, between three and four, and I was a sound man, and presently a ball hit me, here at the third rib — that's why I wear my medal on my right side — and I fell, and I thought: good night world! God keep thee, my dear sweetheart! My wife was my sweetheart then. And then they drew out the ball with their instruments, and I smoked all the time, my pipe never went out, and then I was all right again. But one doesn't forget such a day, and I settled it in the church, that on this day, a mass should be read for me. See, here is the ball, and that is to be laid again on my third rib, when I am buried."

He showed me the ball in a leathern purse, and

then went away, down into the village, led by some labourer's child.

I will now have more patience with the old man; his life was a drop in the sea of history. Struck by an enemy's bullet. . . . A leaden bullet can be extracted, why not also. . . .

Everything that occurs to me, is transformed in my thoughts into the one unsolvable question.

The mother said a true word to me to-day. When I declared to her, that even at the time, I was never perfectly happy, she said:

"Thou hast just deceived thyself also. It's always so in the world, — he who is deceived, has deceived himself, only he won't honestly confess it."

Uncle Peter is an example of true cheerful poverty, he is always in a good humour, and he has grown happy through me. He brings me work, carries away what is finished, and we share the profits between us. He helps me besides in preparing the wood, and he handles axe and saw as lightly as a bird moves its claws and beak.

To-day I received the first money, earned by the work of my hands. Uncle Peter reckoned it out to me on the table. He will take no paper-money, only silver. "Cash is the thing," he said, and he laughed and so did I.

How small are these gains, and yet how refreshing. I have obtained them by labour. All my life long I have only received. Who has procured it for me? Others, who laboured for me, it was a heritage from my ancestors.

I can even arrange what I shall pay Walpurga for

my maintenance. She wished to take nothing, but I cannot do otherwise. _____

It is well that there is so much that is mechanical in my employment, so much that is simply necessary, requiring no reflection, no contrivance. The things have to be made as strong as the productions of nature. If I had anything to do that was an effort to the mind, I should die. _____

I have now been here four months.

My hands are hard.

I see by the treatment I meet with, that all who surround me, love me heartily. _____

I don't know when anything may come, which may scare me from my hiding-place. I will retain this mode of existence as long as possible, and everything around me and within me. _____

If only one could always remain the same, I mean, always in the full possession of one's powers.

I so often grow depressed, and feel myself undone, forsaken, helpless, and incapable, and I think some one must help me. Who? What?

I have daily to overcome my morning melancholy. In the evening I am calm — I am weary. _____

We hear the rain fall, but not the snow. Bitter grief is loud, calm grief is silent. _____

It is terribly cold up here; but we have the forest near us, and my monster of a Dutch stove is a faithful friend to me, and retains the warmth. _____

When Hansei comes from the forest, it is often an hour before he thaws in the literal sense of the word. Till then, no one can talk with him, he is easily offended, and his voice and movements are alike inflexible. When he has thawed, he is quite happy again. "Thank God, that I have been a wood-keeper's boy," he then always says.

He has some special design about the forest, but he does not talk of it.

The peasant class have always overheated rooms; they love a slight degree of intoxication, and warmth with it.

I have no looking-glass. I do not require to know how I look. A mirror is the very foundation of self-consciousness; the beast doesn't see itself, it is only seen, and yet it adorns itself, whether it be the cat before my window or the bird on the tree bough. I too dress myself carefully for my own sake; I am not comfortable, when my clothes do not fit me.

At first it was a hard sacrifice, but now I find comfort and self-forgetfulness in intercourse with those around me. I should like not to sadden their existence, but to brighten it. My friends here feel that I not only participate in receiving, but in giving also.

I think, the idea is Göthe's.

There was great joy in the house to-day. Walpurga's friend and companion suddenly appeared with her husband, a forest ranger. Oh! this happiness, this delight, this interchange of occurrences!

Hansei at once invited the ranger to be sponsor to his boy — for a boy it must be! Walpurga quickly

said that she would like to show her friend the whole house, and I was obliged to go too.

Love in the higher classes, is perhaps greater, more full of energy and depth, and has more in it of all that belongs to passion; but fidelity, this warm-hearted and steady persistence, this seems to me greater among the peasantry. One learns fidelity by work.

I was with Hansei in the forest. Oh! how beautiful! we came past a frozen cascade; the crystal columns glittered in the sunshine.

Hansei showed me, high up the mountain, two trees, which he will have felled for me, so that I may have the best wood for my work.

Shall I work up two whole trees?

Hansei was quite merry, when I said to him: "I have kept your rule of the mountain: 'always forwards and never halting.'"

This new mountain climbing in the winter has made me very tired; but it is very good for me.

I have long wondered that I have never heard of Hansei's family. The little pitch-man now tells me, that his mother died early, and that he never knew his father.

Much in Hansei's behaviour is now more explicable, but it is therefore all the more beautiful.

We are having a slaughter feast in the house.

Hansei is a grand character, and he is a liberal dispenser.

Yes, he is grand. How unsound are our conceptions! An homeric hero, who cuts up boars, and cooks

and roasts them, is an undying hero for us, and Hansei is as much so as any, though not perhaps with the sword.

There is an homeric entertainment in the whole farm, and they bite with as good teeth, as hero Menelaos.

The best thing in the world is a healthy frame, steeled sinews, and strong nerves.

Better still, a quiet conscience with them!

I love the twilight, this growing of day into night, as if one was vanishing into the other. When one lives entirely with the course of nature, every day is fully lived.

Light and fire make us human beings. Man alone lives far into the night.

The omniscient Schnabelsdorf once said: "It is a measure of the degree of civilization, how much men live into the darkness."

Now they are sitting down to dinner at the court; they are jesting and laughing, and anecdotes are being related. — If I were suddenly to appear among them.

No, I won't disturb you, you shall go on living quietly!

And presently they will be going to the theatre — Is not to-day — yes I had almost forgotten it — to-day is my birthday. This day a year ago, I was going to a fancy ball as a water-nymph, and he said softly to me — there in the palm-house, I hear his voice still: "I have intentionally chosen this day — only you are to know it, only you and I."

Oh this night!

I wonder if they are thinking of me there?

The Egyptians had always memorials of the dead brought forward at their festivities. . . . I cannot write any more — I will light my candle — I must work.

In the village down yonder, there lives a deaf and dumb man who makes coarse cuttings in wood. He has neither learned to read nor write, nor has he had any religious teaching; he knows nothing at all. But the village festivals, the holidays, and especially Shrove Tuesday, all these he knows well. He stands with his umbrella in front of the church, and looks at the peasants, and when any one pleases him, he goes to him, pulls off his coat, and sits down at the table, and without saying a word they give him food and drink for three days.

And so he now came to us.

He often weeps, and cannot say why; but he makes himself understood by signs, and the little pitch-man explains, that he weeps because he can't eat any more.

I have tried to make myself intelligible to the dumb man, but we don't understand each other.

(Ash Wednesday.) Everything in the house to-day is so quiet and thoughtful. Every brow is strewn with ashes, and they keep repeating: Mortal, remember that thou art dust!

Ah! mine is a long Ash Wednesday after a mad carnival!

I often have before me the picture of that Egyptian Princess. All her garments are falling from her; unclothed and with loosened hair, she is kneeling in prayer by her open grave.

When wilt thou receive me, thou all-merciful mother earth?

Antigone's grand simple answer comes into my mind. She says to Creon, when he announces to her the sentence of death: "I knew that I should die, thou only tell'st me, when."

I will quietly bear the consequences of my actions, relying on myself, looking for no material or spiritual help from without.

It is a beautiful custom, that people, when they have finished repeating the Ave Maria at the vesper bell, say "good evening" to each other.

They come from heaven back again to their earthly belongings.

When we are alone, Walpurga always addresses me respectfully and calls me Countess.

All is inverted. Once I used to speak familiarly to him in private, and in public

Ah! the one remembrance colours everything.

It would be terrible, if I became sensitive — perhaps I am so already?

The sensitive being is the unarmed among the well-armed, the unveiled one where all are masked.

I will be strong. I must be so.

Walpurga brought me to-day some flowerpots of rosemary, geranium, and oleander.

Hansei had brought them with him from a great doctor, as he says, who lives some distance from here in the valley; his gardener may sell plants, and Walpurga brought them to me, saying: "You have always

had flowers about you, these here last through the winter."

These few plants make me happy. The flower doesn't ask what sort of pot it has, so long as it partakes of the sunshine and rain. What enjoyment have the people in the palace there, of the flowers in the hothouse? They have not planted them, nor tended them; they don't know each other.

Hansei came to me to-day, and said:

"Irmgard, if I have ever done you a wrong — I don't know of anything — I pray you, forgive it!"

"Why do you ask me that now?"

"I am going to-morrow to confession and communion with my people," he replied.

My tears, which are falling on this page, are my confession. I cannot put it into words.

Why is it that I have only entered this narrow and yet peaceful life across the threshold of evil? Why not purely and freely, proudly and strongly?

I once read of Francis of Assisi, that, coming early one morning with his merry companions from some drinking bout, he was suddenly seized by the spirit on his way, and he renounced everything, and led a holy life.

Is it thus always, only by the path of sin?

Still harder though is the question: why hast thou, Queen, had to endure this?

I often go out into the fields in the pouring rain, as if imprisoned. What keeps me here? What entices me away?

I live as if imprisoned between stone and iron gratings, based upon my own will.

I feel all the pain of the exiled.

I live in a state of torpor. Why must I wait for death?

It often seems to me, as if I were lying dreaming on a precipice, and yet cannot awake and rise.

Whither should I go?

Often, and as if with magic power, like a rider on a winged horse, the thought flashes through the desolation of my mind, and troubles me: 'thou know'st nothing at all any longer of the world without — those around thee hide it from thee when they know anything, and thou darest not ask.'

How, if the queen were dead, and he who once loved thee, and whom thou did'st love — oh, so much — if he were doubly alone, and forsaken, and thought mourning of thee? Give him a token, and he will come and fetch thee, and thou wilt ride into the palace as queen on a white palfrey, and all will be atoned for and expiated, and thou wilt be a friend of the people's, for thou know'st them, and hast lived and suffered with them

The thought often seizes me and entwines itself round me like some enchanted net, and won't let me go, and I seem to hear voices and trumpet tones, calling upon me. The wild demons in my soul are not yet at rest.

There slumber within the soul, mysterious lurking demons; imagination calls, and they lift up their heads, and crawl and fly out of their hiding place. They

have cunning eyes and cameleon forms, and can appear as virtues; they borrow the priestly attire and speak the words of sympathy: Have pity on yourself and on others. In a steel coat of mail, they make a show of power and love of action, and they say: Thou canst make one happy and many others too, and thou canst do great and good things to the one, and to many others also.

I annihilate them, I hold the light before their eyes, and they disappear.

Thou livest, Queen, thou friend so deeply injured by me, thou livest . . . I will not ask, nor will I know, whether thou art dead.

Thou livest, and I only wish that thou could'st know of my life of repentance, and how I root up the tender feelings of my heart.

The greek drama of the chained Prometheus is in my mind. Prometheus was the first anchorite. He was outwardly fettered. We fetter ourselves by vows, and rules of an order.

I am no Prometheus and no nun.

I desire nothing in the world without, but some good music with a full orchestra. I am glad that I often hear it in my dreams. How strange it is! In my sleep, I am playing all instruments and great orchestral pieces, which I never could have remembered entirely.

Our life is twofold.

Liberty and work, — those are the noblest prerogatives of man.

Solitude and labour, that is my all.

Walpurga has never reminded me of that mis-giving she had, when she warned me. Ah! she grasped me with her coarse hand, as if I were hovering on the brink of a precipice, and I scolded her and deceived her, and entangled myself. She keeps back all remembrance of it.

Old Jochem expressed the full bitterness of his life, when he said to me to-day:

"Old oxen and cows are killed, old horses and dogs are shot, and old men are fed to death — that's all the difference."

The dwelling house of our farm is fallen into decay. But Hansei will not at once begin to build.

"We must make shift with the old house," he says, "we must first work." And besides he has a certain dread of people's tongues. The house was good enough till now, they would say, why shouldn't it be good enough for him?

So even the peasant in his solitary farm premises, is not perfectly independent. While it matters what people think of him, he must have regard to it.

There lies our whole chain of slavery.

(1st March.) Joy and happiness have entered our house. Even in me there is a ray of light, as if my life were not all night. Walpurga has a boy. Hansei is perfectly happy, he never calls the boy anything else than the "young freehold peasant."

We had a christening in the house. I was sorry not to be able to go to church with them. But I could not.

I have laid aside the peasant garb. It was necessary for flight; but it is so now no longer. I shall now wear simple cotton, as many do in the country, who are engaged in domestic matters. Only I shall still wear the green hat, and that is necessary, for it is good for concealment.

I have laid aside many outward garments; how many inward ones have I still to put off?

I am losing my fear and anxiety.

I was to-day for the first time in the village. It lies scattered on the mountain land, the houses stand singly on the meadows, and, seen from above, look almost like a scattered flock of sheep.

In the night, the noise of the water and of the forest sound so strange to me. There is an everlasting rushing and roaring. How small and vain is a child of man!

Oh! this awakening by the song of the finches, and everything so full of morning air with its invigorating power!

(19th April.) Thick fog the whole day. The death and awakening of nature goes on concealed under the veil of mist.

By the brook yonder, a nightingale sings all the day and all the night long. What an unwearied power, what an inexhaustible fount of song!

Just now, while I am writing, as if it knew that I long for it, it is singing still nearer.

I see every bud opening, I see the ferns still with their volute-like fronds, and even the rough maple has a tender blossom. Everything is blooming and singing. There is music even in the cackling of the hens. The world is an infinite variety.

Oh this happy watching for every single green leaf, for the opening of every bud. The most beautiful thing in nature is that it never makes haste; it can wait, and our whole work is: to wait for her.

At first we care to observe every small unfolding, every growth; but soon that is at an end, it is too much.

One rainy day, and all the buds shoot forth. The bright spring is here. There is in spring a sort of mental unrest, parallel with the impulse at work in nature.

What a mute and yet melodious swaying of the drooping birch, as it now hangs with its rich clusters of blossoms.

The best self-forgetfulness is to look at the things of the world with attention and love, — or really attention is fraught with love, and perhaps that which is most unselfish.

In the early morning, the cuckoo comes quite close to the house and calls.

(Whitsuntide.) The festival preparations are a joy, perhaps a still greater one, than the festival itself. This preparation of flour for cake luxuries; this kneading

and baking, this delight in the sight of a successful festal cake!

Self-prepared joy is perfect joy.

And now the festival! The trees are in blossom and human beings are in their prime, and without stands the forest, and they bring it into the room as Whitsuntide birch boughs.

Hansei has a new suit in the costume of this country. When he went through the farm to-day, and looked round pleasantly, there lay a whole world of happiness in his "good morning."

It pains me again, that I cannot go with them to church. The festal feeling reaches its climax in church-going; but even at home, the house is full of the fragrance of the birches and the festival cake.

(24th May.) We have had a furious spring storm with lightning and thunder. The trees bent and writhed, as if they must break to pieces.

"It's bad," said the little pitch-man, "though for the rye it's e'en good; but a storm in spring brings with it many cold days, though in the height of the summer it brings an increase of warmth."

How symbolical is this of early ripened passion

We have now again bright sunshine. I was out of doors. Millions of blossoms are on the ground, and in the forest many young birds lie dead; they had ventured too early out of the nest, the rain wetted their young wings, and they could not return; besides the nest had no longer any room for them; hungry and forsaken they could only die.

Nature is terrible. It labours so long in the pro-

duction of a being, and then suddenly and wantonly, it lets it perish.

Sundays are the hardest to me of all. One is accustomed to require something particular on that day. One puts on a particular dress, and the world is to wear something especial also. On Sunday I feel most of all that I am in a strange world; perhaps everywhere, but here especially.

The streams rush along and the birds sing, just as much to-day as yesterday. How can I desire, that they should sing me something different to-day?

Nature has no moods. They belong to man alone.

There lies a heavy weight in this.

The forms and colours of the clouds, which I used to see only high up in the sky, I now see on the earth and below me.

I can stay for hours contemplating the changes in the clouds, and their shifting forms on the mountains. Out of such fluid masses, the earth was fashioned into its fixed shape. No artist can ever pourtray this varied world of clouds. Before thoughts are fixed in our mind, they must also have such cloudy forms; only we cannot compass them.

At the border of the forest there is the most varied song of birds, the chirp of the lark sounds with that of the yellow-hammer and greenfinch, the blackbird, the finch, the thrush, the red tail, and the black tit-mouse. Only a few birds, which build their nests deep in the forest, sing there.

In the spring, there is a little stream in every channel in the forest; in the summer, there is nothing but a dry hollow. It is the same in human life.

When I rejoice in the spring, the old Jochem says: "Ah, what does it signify? In so many weeks, the days will again begin to shorten."

If human beings every year bore visible blossoms, like the trees, from year to year blossoms varying in form and colour would appear. The blossoms of my soul were once so brilliant, and now

For the first time in my life, I have seen a pair of eagles soaring in the air. What a life such a pair of eagles must have! They hovered in a circle, far over head. Round what were they hovering? Then they soared higher, and disappeared in the air.

There are still spirits in the world with the freedom of the eagle. The eagle has no one over him, no enemy who can match him. Man alone sends forth the fatal bullet, and produces an effect where only his eye can reach.

He too was then proud and haughty when he had shot an eagle. Why? Because it was a token of his power. And with the token of victory he adorned my hat — oh! alas! alas!

Why does my misery ever recur to me from the infinite distance.

We women are never alone in nature.

The deep thoughtfulness of the old saying ever holds good: Man, the first created, was alone in na-

ture; woman was never alone there. It is repeated through the whole history of our race, and I understand a mysterious secret.

In the fashionable world as in the park, the traces of footsteps are effaced by courteous servants. There must be no traces of yesterday!

And yet their whole life is to be history.

To do nothing evil — that is not to do good.

I should like to accomplish a great deed. Where is it to be found?

Within myself alone.

My little pitch-man is quite another being when out amid nature. He does not love nature, he has only — as he says — his pastime in her, he takes delight in the smallest trait of bird life, and how he knows them all!

(After many rainy days.) I am almost pining away with longing for the sun. I go about, as if fading, thirsting, — I cannot live without sun, it is my debtor for these sweet spring days, they are my refreshment, and I must have them.

If I am so dependent on weather, and if every cloud thus darkens my mind, and every shower of rain plunges me into the chilling feeling of abandonment, it were better for me that I were lying deep within the lake, and the sailor in the boat, floating above my body, were telling those he was ferrying across, as by the convent: Underneath here, there lies a young maid of honour

I have once said adieu to the sun, I will be free of it

There are beings, who only know and who only possess rain and sunshine.

But there are spirits too, full of dew-forming power — these are calm, rich in themselves, productive natures, living rather inwardly than outwardly.

(12th June.) After many warm days, it has rained in the night. Everything is glittering and dropping. Oh! this exquisite morning after a night of storm! To have fully lived such a morning, is worth the trouble of life.

Jochem has a lark in a cage — he must have something shut up with him.

The lark gives me pleasure. Up here, there are no larks, for we have nothing but meadow land; — over the cornfields in the valley they love to soar.

After the midsummer solstice, the wood grows silent. The sun only ripens then; it calls forth no more blossoms and songs. The finch alone is still merry.

The white foal grazes on the meadow before my window. He knows me. When I look up, he looks at me, standing still for a time, and then he gallops furiously hither and thither. I have given him the name of Wodan; he hears it, and he comes to me, when I call Wodan.

I have sketched the foal, and am now cutting it out in birch. I think I shall succeed. Wood however

is hard angular material. I grow easily impatient. I must not be so.

It was a year yesterday, since I lay at the foot of that rock. I could not write a word, my brain reeled with the thoughts of that time. It is now over.

I do not think I shall write much more.

I have now lived through all the seasons in my new world. The circle is completed. There is nothing new to come from without, I know everything that is or that can happen. I am at home in my new world.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to Jesus, who was to suffer death by stoning, and he said to them: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

Thus it is written.

But I ask: How did she go on living, thus rescued from the death of stoning, this woman who was granted life or condemned to it? How did she go on living? Did she return to her house? What was her position in the world? How was it in her heart?

No answer. None.

I must learn the answer by experience.

He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone at her. Oh! grandest word, ever spoken by human lips and heard by a human ear! It divides the history of the human race in twain. It is the "let there be" of the second creation. It divides and heals my small life too, and creates me anew.

Can a being, who is not wholly without sin, give thoughts and admonitions to others?

Test your own heart! What are you yourself?

See, my hands are rough with work, — I have not merely raised them in prayer.

In my solitude, I have never seen a printed letter. I have no book. I wish for none. Not out of mortification though. I wish for myself alone.

It is a crushing burden, always to have to foster thoughts on eternity by oneself alone, to have to take upon oneself one's retirement from the world.

Convent life has its good side. In the choral song, one voice rises, carrying the others with it, and when the tone once glides off, it vanishes by degrees and disappears. But here I am quite alone, I am priest and church, organ and congregation, confessor and penitent, all together, and my soul is often so heavy, so terribly heavy, as though another must help me to bear the burden. Take me and carry me, I cannot go further! cries my soul. Then, however, I rouse myself again, I take my bundle and my pilgrim-staff, and I wander, wander solitary and alone with myself, and in wandering I regain my power.

For the first time for a year I have seen a carriage driving up the white road in the valley. Those within it dreamed not of how my eyes were following them. Whither lay their road? Who were they?

I must sit down again to write. I believe I now know what kindly feeling (*gemüthlich*) means: con-

trivance and forethought in the smallest matters, a perfect placing of oneself in the position, necessities, and moods of another, the poetry of the heart, the imagination of feeling.

True culture is kindness of feeling (*Gemüthlichkeit*). For what is culture? The power of transporting oneself into the condition of another, and of regarding one's own condition as not belonging to ourselves.

I adhere to this. Hansei appears rude and unpolished, but he is far more cultivated than a dozen gentlemen with orders and epaulettes, who shine as the most interesting cavaliers.

I always think, there is something in me, which I have not yet discovered. It leaves me no rest. Is it a thought? Is it a feeling? Is it a word? A deed? I know not. But I feel as if I wanted to give vent to something. Perhaps I shall die, without discovering it.

Old Jochem still knows some verses out of the psalm-book by heart. He keeps repeating them to himself, but entirely perverted, and it is pure nonsense which he makes of them. I wanted to put the verses right for him. But he grew very angry about it, and said, my corrections were something new and that it wouldn't do. His nonsense is dearer to him, there is something mysterious in it to him, and it is imposing to him, because he does not understand it.

He who has not experienced it, cannot know what it is to long for a slight word with human beings who

are your equals. It is a burning thirst. Any one who speaks my language, would now suit me. I cannot endure this state of tension. I seem to myself as if I were in a foreign country, and I listen for the loved tone of my native tongue, but ever in vain. It is well for me that I can work.

As long as I had Walpurga in the palace, I could talk with her well of various things. I went to her from other things, dwelling, as it were, in the true home of my mind. Here, where I have her alone and nothing else, it is different. It is not pride — what have I to do with pride — it is an alienation, or is it a repugnance, that so little of it is left me?

Naïveté is only for a short time pleasing and productive. Wisdom alone is so always; such wisdom as mother Beate's or the physician's. Yes, I long for him more than for any.

Wisdom is cultivated naïveté, or rather it is the naïveté of genius; it is the rosy apple from the beautiful blossom of naïveté, which leaves its blush upon the fruit itself.

Night and day and all elementary influences, clear knowledge, and the mysterious force of nature, perfect the finest fruit.

I can not regard work as the highest necessity of man. The noble man is he, who is idle, who cherishes, nourishes, and develops himself; thus do the Gods live, and man is the God of the creation.

This is my heresy. I have confessed it. But in

the chair of confession, there sits another being, and he is really right, when he says: Well, my child, to do nothing merely to be here — that would be the worthiest and sublimest. Very right! But as no man can be here, without another working for him, — come here, stand on this point! — then each must also work. All must be satisfied. None are here, merely for the sake of being, nor others, merely for the sake of working.

If there were no past, how happy could I be. A second life with remembrance — how sad! And without remembrance, would it be a second life?

There now begins to be a real delight in the house. When we enjoy something, Walpurga says: We planted that ourselves, on this or that day we set our beans, I gave them into Burgei's hand, and then she dropped them on the garden bed!

And so it is with everything. The past days revive.

It has become difficult to me to repeat the same subject in my work, not only once, but a dozen times and more. But that is work; doing the same thing over again. Everything else is pleasure and amusement.

Nature is ever repeating the same, and we must follow her and imitate her. Nature repeats herself in law, man in duty.

I have however made slight variations, and even these please. In going through the stall, I saw the cow, how she turns to her sucking calf, and lows to it. I have now also carved that.

I should like to produce every object in nature again, to reproduce it. I should like men to see it with my eyes.

Oh eternal spirit, I thank thee, that thou hast bestowed this gift upon me.

It is not joy nor repose, which is the aim of life. It is work, or there is no aim at all.

Work and love, that is the body and soul of human existence. Happy he, where they are united!

I have forfeited love, work alone remains for me.

My white foal! Thou look'st at me and I at thee; free and unfettered thou run'st about, and yet I hold thee fast, and send thee out into the world, that they may rejoice in thee too, thou beautiful gladsome animal!

I have sketched my white foal, as it gallops merrily away, as it grazes, as it listens in the distance with nostrils and eye distended, as it lies stretched on the ground, and as it rises again, as it looks at me confidently and comes to me when I entice it. How pure and rich are these movements, how beautiful and sure.

I have completed it, in the utmost excitement: I have carved my white foal in wood. My people are astonished, and I am astonished myself. I believe I have succeeded.

My little pitch-man has carried the work — why should I not call it so? — down to the trader. It was really painful to me to give up my work, but my

magic little horse must support me, and it does support me. I receive a good price for it, and I have received a large order.

I am sometimes obliged to look round to see if they are actually here. I imagine to myself what the mistress of the chamber, or the pious Constance, or Schnabelsdorf, or Bronnen, would say, if they saw me as I now go about.

I am not free, so long as I cannot even command my imagination. Imagination is the mightiest despot.

Our fountain gushes and bubbles the whole night through, and especially when the moon shines, is it so beautiful and peaceful. The earth gives forth its refreshing treasures everlastingly, we human beings have only to come and draw and drink. My favourite seat is by the spring, and it often seems as if it had something especial to convey, for it gushes along quicker and fuller; but it is perhaps only a current of air, that made me fancy it. One falls so easily into dreams by the spring.

Gundel, the daughter of the little pitch-man, affords me especial pleasure. The good, honest, simple creature is now so elevated and happy: she loves and she is loved in return.

Hansei has a farm servant from his native place. He was formerly in the cuirassiers. And this servant, a rough and by no means handsome lad, but extremely true-hearted, loves Gundel. Such a girl, noticed by no one, and only here for the sake of work — when loved by a man, becomes something all at once, her person has now an interest for others, everything in

her is thought good and beautiful, and she is raised out of lowliness and forgetfulness.

Love is the crown of any life, it crowns even the lowliest head.

If Gundel now fetches water and feeds the animals, and does all the rough work, — a higher lustre surrounds her in everything.

She observes with what a sympathizing eye I regard her, although I have said nothing to her; she often comes and asks if there is nothing she can do for me.

I should like to be rich again, to make the loving happy.

Alas! the inordinate desire to be ever something particular! Nature is not at all original, she is always repeating herself. The rose of to-day is like the rose of last year.

Men determine for themselves — that is choice and torment.

I am still vain. I am delighted when a brilliant expression comes into my mind. Is that vanity? Is it pleasure in looking at myself mentally? I think not. I dress myself in my cell for myself; I must be beautiful, and have beautiful things about me, otherwise I am not comfortable. What is rough does not offend me, but what is ugly is like a discord in sound. The so-called cultivated world utters its "ah!" and "alas!" over roughness, but elegant vulgarity is smiled at.

Once at least in every week I have to read aloud to the old Jochem his bond of security. He knows

it, it is true, quite by heart; but still he is happy when he hears that everything is exactly arranged — and, as he says — stamped and sealed. He never allows me to take the sheet into my own hand; I have to read it to him while he holds it. He is extremely suspicious.

The old man is always wishing that I would draw up a memorial to the king for him — he is almost sorry that he has nothing more to complain of — that I would draw up a memorial out of foresight. It is strange how the king always seems to be to him the personification of the idea of all right and justice.

He talks a good deal too of the late king, under whom he served as a soldier, and he always says: "That was a complete gentleman, he has often hunted about here; the present king is no huntsman; I've heard say, he sticks to the priests, and they give him absolution in consequence." He then always asks me if I have ever seen the king, and though I may say "no" a hundred times, he always asks me again.

Oh! how right was Hansei; I should like to crave his pardon! If one doesn't wish to have the old man at meals as long as he lives — and it is terrible to see him eat — it is better not to begin it. It was wise and good of Hansei, and not hard and rough. When one can't carry out an act of kindness, it is better not to begin it.

When I declared this to Walpurga to-day, she wept and said: "It is dearer to me a thousand times when you praise my Hansei, than when you praise me."

Humanity may grow into a heavy duty, but then only can we see whether it is really exercised as a sacrifice and not merely as a pleasure.

I have shown myself naturally kindly to the old Jochem. I have often had him with me and amused him, and now he will never leave me alone; he wants to be with me always, and to rob me of the one thing that I possess — namely, my solitude. It is difficult, but I must settle that he may only come to me at fixed hours. This too is hard to me. I shall no longer be alone for an unlimited time, I shall be bound to hours. When twelve o'clock rings from the valley, the old man comes and sits with me. Our conversation is not very fruitful, for he has but a small contingent of ideas, and everything, not linked with these, fails in exciting any interest; besides, he coughs a great deal, and is always wanting me to tell him of my father; he always forgets again that I have told him — and this was the hardest thing I ever had to say — that I never knew my father. I never did know him so long as he lived; he tried to reveal himself to me in his deepest thoughts, but I understood him not. Out of the depths of my soul I cry: "My poor father, thou didst desire thy perfection, but thy last act was the bitter act of one who was fettered, and yet thou didst but wish to arouse me. I am accomplishing that which thou didst falteringly begin; while I work for thee, I love thee entirely and fully; thou art near to me; thou art what thou didst desire to be to me — my rescuer."

I have now — it could not be otherwise — made a rule with the old man, that he shall only come to

me when I call him. And this again is a new torment to me, almost heavier than before, when the hours were fixed; I am often obliged to think: "It must be time now to call the old man, now he will not disturb me." I am thus more occupied with him than before.

I must learn to bear it patiently, and Jochem too improves. When I say to him: "Now I can't talk," he is satisfied; it is enough for him to be allowed to sit there silently.

Weary with work — how well one sleeps then! Hunger and weariness, how good they are, when one can satisfy them. Outside in the great world they eat and rest, and are never hungry and never weary.

I never knew how much I used to talk formerly, and what a necessity talking was to me. Now I know both these facts since I have learned to be silent and alone with myself. I now see that all contact with others exercised an electric influence over me, and overstrained my nature. I was never untrue, but I was more than I am. I made others merry, and was so in myself, alas, how seldom!

Solitude has a healing consoler, friend, companion; it is work.

He who has not lived alone, knows not what work is.

I often think of those words of Dante's: "There is no greater unhappiness than to remember happiness in misery." Why did he not say what happiness? To remember innocent happiness must ever be a delight, be the unhappiness that succeeded ever so great.

But Francesca was speaking of the other — of guilty happiness, and she is right. I know that she is right.

I think my father said to me at that time when he bid me farewell: "Partake only of such joys as may have a joyful remembrance."

Wonderful subterranean workings of the mind! Just because I remembered to-day those deeply painful words of Dante, everything which I thought and saw throughout the day I translated into Italian. Even now, when I am writing, I observe it.

It often seems to me as if it were a sin to bury myself thus, since I am still to live. I make my voice dumb, and so much else that is within me.

Is it right?

For the sake of self-purification, this life is good for me; but I should like to do something, to effect something for others. Where? What?

I once heard that the beautifully carved furniture of the great is executed by offenders in reformatories. How I shuddered at the thought then! And now — I am doing the same myself, though in free imprisonment, and a sense of justness comforts me while I am thus engaged; I feel that those who have disfigured and poisoned life, ought, while expiating their guilt, to labour at beautifying existence for others.

My work prospers. But I cannot yet use the wood of the last winter. My little pitch-man has brought me some excellent wood which has been dried during

many years in an old house now pulled down. We work happily together, and our profits are good.

Vice is everywhere the same, here and there; only here it is more open. The vices of the masses are rough, those of the cultivated are low.

The upper classes shake off the consequences of their vice, the lower class bear them.

The rough manners of these people are necessary, and are better than lying forms of politeness. These people must be rough and rude; their manners are like the stiff coarsely-grained bark of the oak; it is only because this bark covers the stem, that it can thrive amid exposure to wind and tempest.

I have found that there is much more tenderness and hearty feeling under this rough bark, than under all smooth exteriors.

Jochem told me to-day that he was still a good walker, but that with a blind man it was very troublesome. First of all to grope and try with a light foot whether the soil on which one is going to tread is firm and smooth, and only then to put down one's foot firmly — this is terribly fatiguing.

Is it not just the same in my life? I am always obliged carefully to examine whether the ground is firm enough for me to find a footing; safe for me without fear of stumbling and being discovered.

Such is the course of the fallen.

Alas! why is everything which I hear and see, a symbol of my life?

We live here like plants. The principal care, joy, and sorrow is the weather, Rain and sunshine, just as they are good and necessary for the growth of nature without, affect us also. Hansei often complains that he does not understand the weather about here — at home by the lake he knew quite surely what it was going to be. This ignorance makes him feel never rightly at home here. Our little pitch-man, however, is notably weather-wise, and hence he is an important personage in the house. I am his docile scholar, and he is proud of me. He is confiding towards me, but he indulges in his jokes, though he always remains peculiarly respectful.

There is much tact among people who know nothing of etiquette. When I congratulated the little pitch-man last week on his birth-day, and offered him my hand, his whole face grew red; he thanked me much, and kept saying that when he got up into heaven he would bespeak good quarters for me, and that his old woman mustn't be angry if he had me in eternity in addition to her. He is very ready to do anything for me. When he may light a fire in my stove, he is always quite happy; and when he hews my wood, he ogles at every piece, as if an especial honour were being conferred on the wood, in keeping me warm.

The census has caused me a difficult day. After dinner Hansei produced the paper which had to be filled up, and he said to Walpurga: "Do you write, or let her" — he meant me -- "write her name and age, and where she comes from."

We were in great perplexity, till at last Walpurga

decided that it was not at all necessary, for that the gentlemen in office need not know everything.

And this was a convenient handle, for there was a slip of paper besides, on which there were questions respecting everything: How much milk they had yearly? how much butter they sold? how much poultry they kept? and so on. Hansei was very wrathful about the civil functionaries, who would certainly now lay a new tax upon everything. This wrath set me free, and the state is defrauded of one soul.

The people here regard the state and its officers as their natural enemies, and make no scruple of deceiving them.

For the first time, I have seen a tree felled.

The final trembling has something awful in it, and then the cracking and breaking. It is like some human destiny, which is hurled by one blow from its sunny altitude into the depths and night of misery.

Hansei is having a path cut through the forest, just in front of my window; I shall have a beautiful open view. When I told him so, he seemed delighted.

Hansei was in the capital. With great pride he unwrapped a large parcel, and showed us what a sensible present he had brought. It was the likenesses of the king and queen.

He was so kind, and he wanted me to hang up the pictures in my room; and he was quite annoyed that his wife would keep them for herself. At last he was satisfied when I said: "The dwelling-room belongs to all of us."

The dwelling-room was now painful to me. The

portraits were always looking down on me. Walpurga remarked this, and she removed the pictures to the sleeping-room. I am now more free again.

Hansei pays no regard to such things.

The king has been pourtrayed in the garb of a citizen. Is that a token? . . .

Hansei talks of his forest plan. It is a wise stroke of his that he cuts paths first through the forest, then he can bring down the stems from a distance in their full length; and thus they have thrice the value than when cleft into logs.

(3rd April.) At first, there is so much to observe; the whole world is like a young child, like the first green in spring. Subsequently one grows accustomed to everything that speaks, and laughs, and stands, and goes, and weeps, and jests, and is green, and blossoms, and everything is as it is always and everywhere. I think we could not live if the world were daily new to us, and left us no repose.

Our second mother, habit, is also a good mother.

They have fastened the feet of the white foal with a rope. It cannot now run away, it can only move at a foot's pace. Its beautiful free movements are over, even before it is in harness. Oh! how many human brothers have a like fate with thee, my white foal!

I love the rain, this calm drizzling from the sky. I could stay for hours at the window, looking dreamingly out and listening, were I not obliged to work. It

seems to me as though I had a million eyes, and saw how the drops fall on the half-open buds. Everything is now shooting forth!

But I am ashamed here, where all are constantly at work, to sit staring out idly into the world. The rain in spring is beautiful and soft; the air and every tiny rivulet near the house and on the mountain-side has voice, and form, and substance.

I used always to require a spy-glass, my sight is now longer.

It is because we do not live in the open air, that we are shortsighted.

When a rose is cultivated to great perfection, other thorns grow on it, but still they are thorns.

(15th April.) I heard the yellow-hammer to day for the first time this year. It has in spring more notes, and they are almost entirely in semi-quavers; in the summer it has fewer notes, but they are all semi-tones.

(28th April.) The first swallow is here. Now one may happily rock oneself in the feeling of spring. There are no more fluctuations and uncertainties, no anxious fluttering from one good day to another.

My little pitch-man says that the swallows and the starlings come and go in the night. That gives me matter for thought.

(End of April.) A shower of rain! Oh! what fragrance it awakens in flowers, grass, and trees! And

this fragrance rises into infinite space, and we short-lived children of men think it is all for us. It is all only for itself.

The everlasting belongs to those plants which begin to get green earliest; it thrives at the borders of the forest, and grows even in bad soil.

(1st May.) To-day — the day was rainy and cold, and it hailed again, and the drops all trickled and glittered in golden reflexion. — I heard the cuckoo for the first time in the evening. He flew from forest to forest, from mountain to mountain, calling everywhere.

Why do we say: "Go to the cuckoo." I have discovered the reason: The cuckoo has no nest of his own, no home; he is obliged according to popular tradition, to sleep every night on a different tree. "Go to the cuckoo!" therefore means: "Be restless and fugitive, be nowhere at home."

When I communicated my discovery to the grandmother, she said: "Thou'st got it, thou drawest something good out of everything, thou'st won it."

She meant, that I had won the game of life.

My good little pitch-man has given me a pleasure. I have always enjoyed being up yonder by the maple tree on the projection of rock, and now he has arranged a seat for me there; he has however hewn away all the bushes round and really destroyed my little haunt. But still I sit there, and I shall get back my old feeling of comfort. No human being can make anything perfectly right for another, but still we may be thankful. And gratitude is a soil on which joy thrives.

(On the first Sunday in May.) On Sunday afternoon, when I may not work, I have an unconquerable longing to drive through the park in a well-hung open carriage; not always to be obliged to walk, and to do something; to roll through the world in the spring on some soft seat, to which wheels are fastened, and drawn by swift horses, or — still better — to ride along some forest road, with a strong power under my control, and holding it subject — I cannot forget it.

And in the night when I look up to the distant vault of heaven with its countless sparkling stars, I find it so difficult, to have to sit and to walk. I think of the nights, when, lying back in the carriage, I drove out into the wide world and looked up at the stars — how free, how rich was everything then.

So much within me still clings to trifles.

There are days, when I cannot bear the forest. I do not wish for shade. I must have sun, nothing but sunshine, nothing but light. I then walk along the hot shadeless meadow paths.

I have now a window-ledge, full of flowerpots. It is very different, when one has to wait for the flowers to bloom, and when one receives them in full blossom from the gardener. And the noseays too of that time — there

The evenings are my enemy — they are always so heavy. The morning is my joy — how easy is everything then! How different it used to be! . . .

Out in the world there, the mind feels much as

Baroness Constance does physically: she has always a singing in her ears, and knows no holy repose, stillness, silence. It is only when one neither wishes nor knows any more of the world, that the mental singing in the ear ceases, and one gains holy repose, stillness, silence — every sound which then enters, is a marvel.

The grandmother is quiet and quick, both just as is necessary. She is none of the everlastingly busy and eager, and yet she is never idle. She knows mankind, and yet she is always kind. She has thought a good deal, and at the same time she is naive. She is so sincerely tender to me, indeed she said she had all her life wished for a clever person, who had learned something, and with whom she could talk over everything. And this she does to the utmost. I have to explain a thousand things to her, and she is truly grateful for any new insight I can afford her.

"I like to hew my small wood in store," said she to-day. This means in our language, that she likes to think over a thing beforehand.

There is however still many a dark door, which we have to pass and shut our eyes.

The foal in front of my window often looks at me for a long while, and his whole being suggests thoughts to me. The first man, who tamed a beast, that is, subdued it, so that it would bear him, convey him, and support him, — that man began the dominion of his race. Another beast can kill a beast, but another can *not* turn its life to its own advantage. There are no new beasts to be tamed. Now, mankind are becoming true poets, they condense intangible powers,

they say to steam, to light, to electric sparks: Come and do my bidding!

I have bought some sugar to feed my white foal; that is a great pleasure. And I thought to-day: If any one saw us, the foal and me — it must have been a pretty picture!

Oh! how trifling and vain I still am.

All large landed property, every extensive estate has its vassalage, at the farm here, at the court in the capital there. There, there are so many servants, parasites, and voluntary dependents. The world is the same everywhere.

Rural life is not the beautiful world. There must be farm-horses as well as elegant carriage-horses.

To go on living out of oneself, out of the frame of mind belonging to one's particular nature, excited by nothing from without, — thus one learns to know oneself and to know the supreme one. In the desert, the deity is revealed to the individual heart. The bush burns with fire and is not consumed.

Ever anew do I feel the sublime air of the mountains breathed upon me.

The whole world below me is flooded by a sea of mist, only the mountain summits tower above it. I witness daily, as it were, the first day of creation.

I learn to understand the sublime. It is the awe of what is great, not the awe of fear. I feel as if I were dwelling in a temple.

Being alone often makes one heavy and half sleepy. I feel it sometimes even in myself.

Hansei often stands for hours at the window on a rainy Sunday. I am convinced, he thinks at first of some horse, some cow, or some sale of wood, or of an acquaintance, then his brain grows dizzy, and he thinks of nothing more. This childlike lying there and looking out into the world — when one wakes from it, is as good and strengthening, as if one had slept. It is indeed also only an elementary existence.

I look back at my journal: formerly I seem to have felt as if I were here only as at a travelling station, where one is detained by adventure and interest; now I see I am at no station, I am at the goal.

I will unpack my goods and chattels as the grandmother exhorted me, and I will break the chests to pieces. Here, I will remain all my life. And now, since I am resolved to remain — even if I were discovered to-morrow, and the raillery of the world pursued me — now I have a happy sense of being at home. I am and I will remain here.

I was first reminded of how all this was passing through my mind, by my little pitch-man saying to-day: "You look so pleased, so — I don't know at all, how—but you have never looked like that before."

Yes, dear little pitch-man, you are right. I have only to-day felt myself truly at home. I have struck root, like the cherry-tree sapling before my window.

The old resident said to me to-day: "See, child, old age takes away much, but I can still dream so beautifully, just as beautifully as in my youth."

Of all flowers, I find the richest morning dew on the rose. Does it give the richest perfume? Does the perfume form dew? No green leaf has so much dew on it, as the leaf of a flower.

I am often tempted to relate the story of Lear to the whole house and to Jochem also.

It vexes me that I do not give them everything that I have, and how would it vex me, if they did not understand me!

How widely different are art and religion after all!
The one can be given to all, the other not

To give more refined pleasures to the people, is not possible. They must work hard through the week, and on Sunday they play at nine pins as a recreation, and dance in heavy boots. They must have rude pleasures and a rude religion.

(On Sunday, while the bells are ringing.) The people live entirely without art. Plastic art, dramatic art, the higher style of music, literature, none of these exist for the people.

All that presents itself to them as the other life over and above the trivial things of the present, is the church. And the best thing in the church, and in all religions, is the poetry it has in it.

What becomes of a being, who for years reads no serious book, or who does not read at all, and who thus receives no grand and well-worked-out ideas? If he is rich and noble, his life becomes empty play; if he is poor and lowly, his life becomes nothing but work.

Hence, nature has given song to the peasantry, and history has brought forward religion, which offers to all people in its chalice the fermented wine of all science and of every art; but new wine must ever be added, or —

(30th July.) The whole wide world was to-day one cloud of mist, the sun was veiled. It seems as if some artistic creative eye were brooding over the organisation called into existence. The flakes are rent asunder. For a moment, the mountain world is free. The mists disperse, but new ones seem arising out of the earth.

Out in the world, one is ashamed of enthusiasm about moonlight. I bathe myself in the delight of the moonlight night, when the whole world rests in the silent glory of its soft glow, and the stream alone murmurs and sparkles.

Temptation comes again to me, and says: It is a sin against nature, a waste, to employ the rich power dwelling within thee, on aught which others could do also. Go into the world, regard thy present existence only as a state of transition!

No, I will remain.

When I stand on the mountain side, and look out into the wide expanse, I am often obliged to ask myself: Art thou still the same Irma? Where is any vestige of thy past glittering life?

There is nothing but a heavy burden at my heart.

We consider it tedious to talk of the weather, and yet there is nothing more important; the plants, the

animals, they all feel what sort of weather it is; the weather is the event of their day; man can say that also. And he who sees how mist and wind and rain are formed, he to whom the sun or the clouded sky is everything, his whole life is in the weather.

There stands a cloud, like a girdle, on the side of the mountain yonder, motionless throughout the whole day. So there are often spaces of time, like the spaces of place there, veiled in mist, and out of tune; a whole tract of our inward being is often so eclipsed for days.

Man conveys his ideas by looks, the beast does not; the human face changes ever according to the emotion of the mind, that of the beast does not, and the beast has too always only the same tones; the dog barks alike in joy and anger, the time only is altered. Or are they the same tones only to our ear?

Such inharmonious, and thoroughly unconnected notes, as the bird above me produces — if they were uttered by a human being, would rend my ear. But why not so now? Why do they almost please me? They belong to the bird, they are a part of his nature; but man, having the power freely to form his own tones, we expect them to harmonize.

What is all our knowledge? We do not even know what weather it will be to-morrow; there is no sure token for this first condition of life. The peasants too know nothing, and yet they like to talk of it.

The year has its dramatic turning point, and that

is harvest time. Then there is a haste and a suspense unlike everything else; men are then thoroughly unsettled in their moods.

If any one wishes to learn how thoroughly debased the whole world is, he should hear my blind man; his strong words strike like clubs. He is always wanting to inquire of me respecting Hansei and Walpurga, he would be glad to know anything bad of them; that they are said to be very honest, leaves him no rest.

An expression of the physician's occurred to me to-day:

We are all passionate, the difference is only in the due division of our impulsive movements. He who springs down the steps at one leap, breaks his neck; he who goes down gradually in moderate order, remains sound.

I never look at the clock here. To me, life is no longer divided into hours. Morning, noon, and evening, rings from the valley, and according to that all is arranged. The clock is on the church tower — the church determines the time.

Old Jochem is ill, but the physician, who visits him, is of a cheerful nature; he maintains that Jochem would live for many years if he could have kept up his annoyance and his law suits, for that these furnished him with life and excitement and amusement at the same time; he had still something to fight out in the world, still some one to abuse, and this kept him up; now in his peaceableness, he was dying of ennui.

"You smile?" said the physician to me. "Believe me, I am quite serious. A child in the cradle, that does not cry, and a dog chained up, that does not bark, have no excitement and no life, and they perish."

He may be right in much of this.

I always feel myself under restraint with the physician, and he looks at me so strangely, and with such close scrutiny.

"Thou good God, all the blades of grass are now coming up, and they will put me below, and I shall never come up again," lamented Jochem.

The old man is dead, this very night he passed away in his sleep. No one was with him.

He died like a tree in the forest, all his strength was absorbed.

Little Burgei now sleeps in my room, my people will hear of nothing else, and I am not allowed any longer to be alone in the night.

I am so fearful. Over my head, a corpse is lying on the loft, and a solitary light is burning — the light is left burning, till the dead is buried. And yet I feel, as if I must overcome my fears, I must! Yes, I will.

It still agitates me, to think how the old man remembered me. He called me to him yesterday and said: "Irmgard, thou'rt a stranger and thou'st been good to me — I'd like to give thee and bequeath thee something now, and I have considered and I can give thee something, it's the best I have, and it benefits me nothing if they put it in the grave with me, but it can be good for thee and it shall be good for thee, for there's a charm in it. See, there it is, take it, it's the bullet that hit my third rib; keep it safely. He who

has a bullet to carry about with him, which has once hit a man, is no more in danger of sudden death befalling him, unawares — thou can'st rely on that! And now I have something more to say to thee: tell me, what was thy father's name? Thou'st a'ready said, that he is dead. When I get into heaven, I'll seek him out and tell him thou'rt a very honest girl, a little bit strange — I don't know rightly — but honest. I'll tell thy father that, and it 'll be good news for him."

I could not tell the name to the old man — Can I do so? I could only thank him that he had given me something which was of so much value to him, and it's strange — when I now hold the bullet in my hand and look at it, how agitated I feel!

I will prepare myself to follow the old man to the grave.

I was at the church-yard, when the old man was buried. I shall one day lie there too.

I, think that death must be conquered through the will. If I will not die, I shall not die. Is the will that hidden thing within me, which I am seeking? And yet — I have no will, no one has a will, our whole life and thoughts are nothing but a result, a necessary result of events and occurrences, of waking perception and nightly dreams; like the beasts we can change the scene, but not the great scene, this great prison: we cannot quit the earth. The law of gravitation and attraction holds fast our souls also. On high yonder move the stars, and I am nothing but a flower, a blade of grass, clinging to the earth. The stars see me and I see them, and we cannot join each other.

A reigning prince has visited our farm. His highness, Grubersepp, of whom Walpurga has told me so much, is arrived with his little son, or — to speak more correctly — with his two black horses and his son. There is a life about the house and a pride and a happiness, as if a reigning prince had really come.

Grubersepp looked at me very strangely.

"Is that mincing girl," — said he to Hansei, pointing backwards with his thumb, — "is she there, of your wife's side?"

"Yes, my wife —" Hansei muttered something. — I saw well that it was difficult to him to tell a lie, and to the great peasant too, to whom he was showing his whole property.

It is just the same among the peasants, only the great ones know each other. But this intercourse is beautiful and grand. The two men exchange no friendly words, but their acts show that they are on terms of friendship.

All are happy in the house. Grubersepp has said, that the whole farm is in good order. And when Grubersepp says "in good order," it is just as much as when the superintendent says "divine."

During the two days that Grubersepp was here, there was an indescribable embarrassment in the house, that is, everyone thought only of him. Now everyone is in the old track again, but the faces of all are beaming with joy. A man has said, and such a man too, that the property is in good condition, and satisfied as a being may be in himself, it is something quite different when he hears from the lips of another, that he is good for something.

My hand is still trembling with fright. I was in the forest to-day; I was sitting on my seat, and I saw a figure passing through the wood, stooping now and then to gather a flower or to pick up a stone; the figure came nearer, and — who was it?

The friend for whom I have so often wished, — the physician. He asked me in his deep clear voice: "Child, does the road here go down into the village?"

My throat closed, I could not speak. I pointed to the footpath yonder, and rose trembling. He asked me: "Are you dumb, poor child?" This helped me. I am dumb, dumb, I cannot speak a word. Without uttering a sound, I fled away from him, and long, long have I wept, as I have not done for years. I wanted to hasten after him, but he was gone, I could not support myself, my limbs seemed to give way. Now I am calm — all is over — all must be over.

I have had long, heavy days. My work did not speed well and everything went amiss with me. The world without roused me again.

I thank Providence most of all that I have learned to see. I see something everywhere, which delights me and makes me think. The noblest pleasures, and the most extended, are those obtained through the eye.

The little pitch-man knows every bird by its song; that delights me. We say in the proverb: a bird is known by its feathers, — because naturally but few know them by their song; their feather-attire is fixed, their song is fluctuating and transient; the one is variable, the other not.

The cracking of the trees in the forest, which used to frighten me so in that night of death, I now often hear with calmness. And how strange! as soon as a bird sings, it ceases. Whence is that?

I have got some fresh work. Now I am right again. Only my little pitch-man is sickly. At first it almost fretted me. But I have overcome the selfish habits which tyrannized over me. I have requited true service with service. I think I have nursed the uncle well; and now he is all right again.

I am however not so selfish as I reproach myself with being; I have made good human beings faithful to me. But I cannot do good to those who do not concern me! I belong to myself and to a small, infinitely small circle — beyond it, I can do nothing.

When I sit here so silently and look at the one room in which I live and in which I hope to die, an anguish amounting to horror comes over me; here is my chair, my table, my work-board, my bed, this I have till they lay me in the grave, and not one human soul is mine!

The thought oppresses, till I long to call out; and calmness returns with difficulty. Work helps.

I have imagined an hour of omniscience.

The hour from eleven till twelve yesterday noon — a slight shower of rain was passing over, then it grew bright again, and I saw in spirit, how thousands of people were spending that hour: I saw the labourer at the edge of the forest, the king in his cabinet, the seamstress in her garret, the miner in his shaft, the

bird on the tree and the lizard on the rock; I saw the child sitting in the school, and the dying old man at his last breath; I saw the ship on the sea, I saw the coquette painting herself, and the poor day-labourer rooting up weeds from the field. I saw everything, everything! I lived an hour of infinity.

And now I am fettered again, an isolated, small, poor, stammering child. The great thought of infinity passes like a fugitive through my mind, and finds no resting place there. We must again cleave to trifles.

I will return to my workboard and my carving.

I once read that the Arabians washed their hands before prayer, but in the desert where there is no water, they wash their hands in sand and dust. So it is. The dust of work purifies.

The peasantry have no books for reading, each speaks and listens to the other.

Books make men alone for themselves. Narrations, verbal statements, these are everything.

The warnings — nay, the experiences of a ruined worldling possess their double good: Not only she who has been astray, is rendered observant of everything, and is the best way-mark — I mean, he who receives an admonition from a perfectly pure being, has no choice, he must accept it, for purity is the highest authority; but every word from the lips of a ruined being must be tested, it must not be at once rejected. And this is good, this makes me free.

The swallows are going away! How they begin to gather together in flocks, and then with the speed of lightning to take their zigzag flight like a cloud! Thus to fly together in irregular courses, is a thing we cannot imagine at all. When, and how, do they point out to each other, that some sharp turn is to be taken?

To fly! — Another sphere of life is before us, and we cannot conceive it. And we think we understand the world? What is fixed, we conceive, and only what is fixed — beyond that, certain thought ceases, and conjecture begins.

I overheard Franz, Gundel's lover, saying to her: A woman, just like Irmgard, was once with the queen at the military manœuvres in the uniform of our regiment, and she rode up and down before our line.

Suppose the soldier recognized me and betrayed me!

What a confusion of lurking thoughts is the human heart. In all my present misery, a sort of triumphant feeling passes through my mind, that in so many thousand eyes my image is impressed.

To be allowed to go alone — I am long in accustoming myself to it, I am often still imagining that the servant must be going behind me. Oh! what an artificial and metamorphosed life we live!

I was a whole day alone in the wood. Oh! what a happiness it was! I lay on the ground and above me the trees rustled, and the brook murmured below. If I could but end my days here, like a wounded doe, — I am one, traces of blood mark my way — no, I am well and healthy again, I was once in the world, in another world, and now I am living anew.

'The little pitch-man knew my father. He was once scraping resin for a whole summer in our forest, and my father then went up to him and taught him — he understood everything — how the pitch is prepared better and more purely.

"Oh, that was a man. I only wish you had known him," said the little pitch-man to me, "such a good man! I have since heard from many, how he helped everyone, he understood everything; he shewed me how the best turpentine is got out of larches; he never liked giving to people, though he wasn't avaricious, he helped them to work, and taught them how things were to be done with least trouble and most advantage — that's more than giving them money, — and every year he lent money that they might buy a pig, and when they had sold it afterwards, they were obliged to pay him back. They often laughed at him, and gave him a nick-name in consequence, but it was a name of honour. Yes, and could one believe it? That man had heavy trouble, his children deserted him."

How it all stirred up my heart!

That whole evening, the terrible mark on my forehead burned like fire.

To-day is the anniversary of my return to the summer-palace.

I dreamed then, that a star fell down on me, and that a man stood with averted face, saying to me: 'Thou also art alone —

There is an abyss in the soul, which no safety-lamp can reach, for all becomes extinguished there. I turn away — here the wild elements dwell.

I have been thinking of my childhood. I was three years old when my mother died. I have no remembrance of it, except that the moving and pushing in the next room frightened me so much. Oh, mother! why did you die so early? How different had I been

I? Who is this I? Could it have been another, it were not I. It was to be so.

They put the black clothes on me and my brother, and I only remember that our father went with us; he told us that it would be for our happiness not to grow up alone with him; he kissed us at parting, he kissed me and my brother, and then me again — it seems to me now as if he wished to keep my kiss last of all.

What are the remembrances of my childhood? A silent convent, my aunt the lady abbess, my friend Emmy. Only this I know: When friends came, they said, turning to me: Ah! What a beautiful child! What large brown eyes! Emmy told me that I was not beautiful, that the strangers were only laughing at me, and ridiculing me; but I saw myself in the looking-glass, I saw that I was beautiful. I said so to Emmy honestly, and she confessed to me that I was right; my father also came, he came from America, and he looked at me a long while! Father, I am beautiful, am I not? I said to him.

"Yes, my child," he replied, "thou art, and much is demanded of those who are beautiful; it is a heavy task to be beautiful. Keep thyself ever so, so that thou may'st deserve that others may take pleasure in thee."

I did not understand him at that time. To be beautiful a heavy task? — I understood it now.

I know not how the years passed away. I went back to my father. Bruno, who was to have been an agriculturist, entered the army, against my father's will. My father lived entirely for himself, in his works and studies, and let us do as we liked; he was proud of it, and he often said that he would exercise no authority, but would let us grow up, unfettered, as free natures. I returned to the convent, and remained there till my aunt died.

And here — pardon me, thou great and pure spirit — here lies thy error. Thou didst cast off thy paternal majesty, and didst wish to live from free love — and we? Bruno would not understand it, and I could not. And so, thou wast alone, and we were miserable.

Bruno went to the court. He was handsome, cheerful, and full of merriment. He brought me to the court also, my father allowed me to follow my own choice — and there, there began my misery. I was beautiful, I was so, I know it, and I had courage not to think as others, I had become the free nature, which my father had desired. But for what end? —

I have been looking over what I have written. Ah! how little good does such a year yield, and how much has one lived and how long has one laboured; but — the flowers too require a long time ere they blossom, and fruit takes long to ripen; the sunny days and the dewy nights are needed for them.

A rainbow! Rest and peace are nowhere on earth, they are not tangible objects, they lie only in our imagination, and as things appear to us. Now I understand why

in the Bible, the rainbow is designated as a token of peace after the deluge: — the seven colours are not really there, they only appear to the eye of him who receives the broken rays at the angle of sight. Rest and peace are not to be gained by force, they are pure gifts from the heaven within us, rain clouds and sunshine meeting, in our tears and smiles.

A fear often comes over me that I shall lose all the cultivation of my nature from having no one with whom I can speak my own language, and — I know not how to express it — in whom I can find myself, my real nature, reflected. And yet, that which makes man a human being, is possessed by those around me here, as much as by the most cultivated. Whence therefore springs this fear, and what is the good of this culture? Do I still desire to use it in the world? I do not understand myself.

That is the point, why our modern culture cannot take the place of religion: religion makes all men equal, culture unequal. There must however some day be a system of culture, which will make all men equal; then only will it be the right and the true. We are yet only at the beginning.

I have a great work before me. It must succeed.

Hansei lifted little Peter upon the white horse, and let him ride a couple of steps. That was a delight! And how my Wodan looked round at father and son! I have sketched it, and I am now working at the group. Hansei, Peter, and the white horse, all together. — If I can but succeed! I can hardly sleep for thinking of it.

The group has succeeded. Not indeed as I had wished. The human figures are stiff and unmeaning, the horse however is again life-like, and all in the house are quite delighted with the work.

Hansei wants me to go to the chase with him, that I may copy stags, does, and chamois, these, he thinks, are the best subjects.

I have also attempted the animals in the forest. I do not succeed with them, as with the horse. I can only sketch that which has no fear of me and which I therefore love. I shall adhere to my horses and cows.

All the mountain summits, which I see, have names, and they are so suitable and strange. Who gave them to them? Who accepted them? What names could we invent now-a-days? Our earth and our language have already grown torpid, everything has ceased to flow. I think something similar was said that evening at tea with the queen.

The carnival is a great festival, it is true merriment. Peasants from the village too came to visit us. They often come on Sunday. I have however never heard them speak of anything but cattle, or the state of the crops, and the price of corn. I sit sometimes apart in the room and hear them talk. I like to hear human voices.

The stories, which they tell each other, seem simple, but in truth nothing better is produced in the salon.

Why have I not lived out my life purely? I was created for a noble existence.

Out yonder, my white foal runs freely about, while I sit here, and copy him. To render objects seen by the eye into permanent forms — that is the work of man alone. We have words for everything around us, and can imitate everything, and higher still, we have music and pure thought. What an abundant source of knowledge is it, to be a human being.

It has been a heavy time. The grandmother was ill. All in the house were in alarm. Hansei never left the farm premises, for he feared the worst. It was a comfort to me, that my nursing did the grandmother so much good.

Hansei has quite laid aside his pride as a rich peasant; he was anxious to do something also for the mother, and he hewed the wood required for heating her room, and carried it in himself.

He always told the doctor to spare nothing, that nothing was too dear for the grandmother.

The doctor explained to me the grandmother's illness, as if I were a physician.

The grandmother often sent me out into the forest with the uncle. It was still raw outside, and we soon came home again.

The grandmother is now recovered, and is sitting in the spring sunshine.

"Yes, one must have been out of the world, to be thankful for being back again," said she. "He who hasn't been away, doesn't come home." And to-day she told me much about the death of her five children. "This one would have been now so old, and that one so old," she kept saying — they had in imagination grown up with her; and then she told of the death of

her husband, how he was drowned in the lake that time with the float of wood, and how Hansei had then remained there. "He was a strange man" — she always said of her husband — "but thoroughly good."

The little pitch-man was the most despairing of us all at his sister's illness.

"She was the pride of our family," he kept saying, as if she were already long dead. He is now however almost the happiest among us, and when the grandmother sat for the first time on my seat under the maple tree, he said: "I shall get a golden chair in heaven for that seat. That is a place, the king hasn't got a finer, he can't have the sky painted bluer, or the woods greener."

The little pitch-man brings me sad news. How shall I extricate myself? The purchaser of my work has sent word that he will come and see me, as he has a large order; a new hunting seat of the king's, is to be decorated with carved wainscoting, and I am to have much of it to execute.

How shall I evade it?

The good mother has helped me out. She received the employer herself, and explained to him, that I would see no one. She consented to no lie, as Walpurga would have been more inclined to have done.

I have now the last design before me, and beautiful wood.

I have undertaken a part of the work.

It is all the same how one's life is passed, so long as there has been a self-awakening and a consciousness. All the arts and sciences exist, only that our own consciousness may be awakened by that of others. He who can do this of himself, has accomplished a great end. He who awakes himself in the morning at the hour that he wishes to go to work, needs not to be awoken by the watchman.

Hansei has become a juryman. Walpurga is proud of it, and he himself bid farewell with a certain solemn air of pride.

It is a beautiful thing, that the conscience of the people is appealed to in pronouncing sentence.

Hansei is back again. He has many terrible things to relate.

It seems to me as if all our life, all the destinies of men, were but, as it were, a magic lantern on the wall.

Hansei was deeply affected as he said:

"Yes, all my sins came across me there, and it was a heavy penance when I had to pronounce my verdict. It has only been good luck with all of us, when we haven't fallen into sin, and haven't had to sit on the rack there."

(Sunday 28th May.) The grandmother is dead.

I cannot write of it. My hand feels paralysed.

She kissed my eyes and said: "I kiss thine eyes, and wish that they may weep no more!"

Two hours before her death, she said to Hansei:

"Make Burgei a sledge, she has such a desire for

one; it'll please me, if thou'lt do it, she won't get any harm by it. I beg thee to do it."

"Yes, yes, grandmother," replied Hansei — it almost stifled his voice to feel how the grandmother was even now thinking of the child, and wished for nothing but to give her pleasure.

The fear of death lies heavily upon me and yet I feel a sense of freedom inwardly. I have seen a beautiful death. My hand has closed a dying eye. I have accomplished the hardest duty that is imposed on the living. I had not thought I could have done it. I could not do it once, when I myself lay on the ground and beside me was my father cold in death.

The death of the grandmother has taken all fear from me. I have strength to assist Walpurga. Her lamentations know no limit. "I am now an orphan like you," she cried and threw herself on my neck. Then she called to the dead: "Oh mother, can'st thou inflict it on me, that thou leavest me? Oh, good God, and the bird is still hopping in its cage! Yes, it can hop, but mother'll move no more."

She took a cloth and hung it over the cage of the cross-bill, and said: "You dear little creature, I should like to let you fly, but I can't; my mother liked you so, I cannot let you go," and then she turned to the corpse again and said: "Oh mother! can it be day again, if thou'rt not here? Yes, the clock ticks, and goes on, and it can be wound up, and oh! good God, the hours will come and go, and I'll not have thee; oh, forgive me that so many hours have been, when I was not with thee!"

The clothes' press flew open suddenly, and Walpurga started; but composing herself again, she said: "Yes, yes, I will wear thy clothes, I'll wear them, and that for good, and no evil thought shall come into my heart and no evil word on my lips, only help me, so that I may be always thine. Oh good God, now there is no one on earth to say 'child' to me: I remember thy words, how thou said'st: 'So long as one can say "father" and "mother," there is something to love on the earth, which bears one in its arms; it is only when the parents are gone, that one is set down on the hard ground!' I will keep all thy words, and my children shall keep them too. You know too, Irmgard, don't you, many of her good words?"

So Walpurga went on lamenting, and I could only reply:

"Yes, and hold that fast which she said: One may also sin with words. Don't give way to such lamentation!"

Walpurga fetched her mother's prayer-book, and read in it the prayer for a departed soul.

After she had finished reading, she gave the book to me also. I read with gratitude and devotion. We sing also hymns and melodies, appointed by others — in times of extreme excitement we can fix on nothing of our own — we take the words of poets on our lips; they sing, compose, and feel for us; in the poet's heart is in truth the second Jerusalem of civilization. The whole wide world, through which man is distinguished from beast and plant and stone, is just that one man experiences feelings before, and another afterwards. An everlasting song resounds through

the human race, from the beginning until now, and too is mine, and my voice is a tone in the harmony an everlasting sun shines from generation to generation, and I am a ray in it. The mountains mute outlast generations, and no new one is added to their number; but from the human soul, there rises from generation to generation new aspirations of the mind.

How good is a happy death! Wonderful power of religion! Over the couch of the sick, links are suspended from heaven, by which he supports himself and if they are not really there, he thinks he grasps them, and the faithful grasp and hold, support him.

There was a wonderful feeling of repose in the house, when the grandmother was buried. It is a comfort to Walpurga, that so many people were present at the funeral.

"Yes, they all honoured her," said she, "all, but still they have not really known her. You and I, we knew her. Don't you remember Hansei, when they stole the potatoes from the field at home? And she said: 'I one did but know who the people were who stole them.' And then I said, 'Mother, would you inform against them?' 'You silly thing,' she answered, reproachfully, 'how could you imagine I could mean that? I mean, if we did but know who the people were who steal our potatoes by night; they must know too that we haven't a great many. But they must be very unhappy people, and one ought to help them as much as one can.' Yes, that was what she said. Was there ever any one, who could think like that? The

aints must have been like that, they thought good of everything. She had no feeling of aversion for a sick person, and no hatred of a wicked one, she only thought always: how much misery people have to suffer, that they are so ill, and others that they are so wicked. If I could only grow to be like my mother. Admonish me always, Irmgard, when I am angry and cross. You'll help me, won't you, to become what my mother was, so that some day my children may think of me? Ah, if one were only always as good as one could be. But she was right, when she used to say: Wishing on the one hand, and blowing on the other, is much the same.'"

I will now go back to work.

This is the hard and yet consolatory part of severe work: Hansei and Walpurga are obliged to labour, and they cannot give themselves up to grief, for too much depends on them.

As regards the highest affections, the key-note of the king and the beggar, of the imaginative poet and the simple heart, are all the same.

Walpurga's lamentations are in the same key as those of Lear for Cordelia, and yet again how utterly different. To a father, when his child dies, the future dies; to a child, when his parents die, the past dies. Ah! how inadequate is every word!

How an expression of Hansei's startled me to-day! Has doubt then penetrated into these hearts? And they do their duty in this world without belief in another — at least, without any sure one.

The pastor preached over the coffin, and said: "See

the trees, a few weeks ago they were dead, but they return to life in the spring." "The pastor had no right to say that," complained Hansei; "not in that way. That is a consolation which one may give to a child, but not to us, not in that way. What does he mean too about the trees? Those which are still alive grow green again in spring; but those which are dead never grow green again — they are hewn down, and new are planted or sown in their stead."

It is strangely solitary to us all in the house. Every one feels something lacking. But Uncle Peter is the most inconsolable of all.

"Now I go about alone in the world," he says, "and I have no more brothers or sisters. She was the pride of our family," he keeps on repeating.

Hitherto he has slept in the garret with the farm-servants, but now Hansei has assigned him the old resident's room, and he is quite proud about it; often however, he laments again, "Why did I come so late to that there? How stupid we were, my sister and I. We could have gone in there together; could there have been anything more beautiful? How nicely we should have lived there together, and you could have been with us too. Oh, how stupid! how stupid is old age. We only see all the good nests when the trees are bare, and there's nothing more in them. 'We get something to bite when we have no more teeth,' my sister used always to say."

"My sister said," he now always adds when he is advancing anything in which he does not wish to be contradicted, and I believe he imagines that his sister really said it. He has inherited her closet, and he

always first knocks at the door with the key before he opens it.

My little pitch-man is a good bee-master. He knows how to take care of the bees, and he calls them the poor man's pasture-cattle.

"Since my sister died," he complained to me to-day, "I have had nothing but misfortunes with my bees; they want nothing more of me."

I have not written for months. For whom shall these pages be? Why do I torment my mind by recording the passing events around me, and the emotions within me? The thought perplexed me. Now I am calm again. For months I have worked, and only worked.

It seems to me as if I must soon die; and yet I feel myself in the fulness of my power. That people too trifle with my madness, makes me uneasy.

I have just begun to feel that my repose here was not complete — that any minute might have disturbed it. But now come what may, I will remain.

A storm! To us, who always live with sun and moon, and all changes of weather, a storm is something quite different than to the people in their houses, who only look at the weather when they are idle or have a party of pleasure in prospect.

There is a feeling as if one were transported back to the moment of creation; as if everything were again given up to chaos, and nothing were stable. The infinity of the great organization of the world and of

the powers in subjection to it, is pronounced in the thunder and shines forth in the lightning.

I once saw at a public gaming-table, while clap after clap was thundering, and the lightning flashed, and the whole frivolous world had withdrawn from the play, a single lady go on with her stakes. The croupiers were obliged to continue working. This lady enters largely into society; and a maid-servant who stole a silver spoon, she sent to a house of correction. How low this thief! And she —

Certainly, this I ought not to forget; the lady attends mass every morning before she goes to the gaming-table.

The most beautiful death would surely be to be killed by lightning. On a beautiful summer's evening to be suddenly struck by lightning.

I have seen a being from the polite world. A young, handsome, lively man, with delicate, well cared-for hands — he is a musician — passed last night at our farm. The storm had surprised him. He stayed here, and he told us:

"I have asked my physician honestly upon his conscience — you see, I am already blind in this eye — and he tells me that I shall be so of the other within a year. So I wish now once more to see the great, vast, beautiful world; he who has not seen the Alpine world, knows not how beautiful our earth is. I am grasping it once more in my mind, securing it within me; I have fixed in my remembrance the sun, the mountains, the forests, the meadows, the streams, and the lakes, and the human face above all. "Yes,

child," he said to me, "and I will preserve the memory of thine; thou art the sweetest peasant-girl I have ever seen. I shall learn thy face by heart, as I have learned poems by heart, that I may repeat them and bring them back to mind in night and solitude."

I was embarrassed, but he was extremely merry. Only now and then, he cast a strange inquiring glance at the bandage over my brow. What could he have thought of it?

I should like to have told him that I had one day at Gunther's house sung a song composed by him. He did not mention his name.

I cannot say how the picture of that handsome young man touched me, and there was so much power in him — no vestige of weak sensibility. He comes from the north, and he has something about him of the austere beauty of the northern races; he has breathed salt-sea air, and that makes him sturdy, as they call it there. To me, these sturdy natures are deeply interesting and exciting. One cannot be dull, brooding, or self-sufficient in their society.

Oh, what can a strong will do! How the human mind wrestles with the powers of nature and conquers them . . .

This is the first time I have wept since the grandmother died, and now I feel light and free.

The young man with his increasing blindness is gone away, and I heard him singing far along the valley.

If I could be still something to the life of another human being . . . Any one who could not see my brow nor praise my beauty, I could feel doubly well disposed to him.

It is over!

What strange shadows does the game of life cast even upon us up here! —————

In this visit I have seen that a strong portion of vanity still lurks in Walpurga. She could not avoid gradually leading the conversation to the subject, and at length telling the stranger distinctly that she had been the nurse of the crownprince, and had lived almost a year in the palace. There is something in her, as there is in a man who has many high orders of merit, and yet walks about undecorated, like a general in civil clothes; he modestly declines to be called "Excellency," but still he wishes it. That year of court atmosphere has left its traces on Walpurga.

Hansei, who also liked the stranger, and showed deep compassion for him, was evidently annoyed at his wife's ostentation; but he repressed the feeling. He is strong in self-command. To-day, however, as they were going together to church, Hansei asked:

"Won't you hang the picture round your neck, in which you are drawn as a nurse with the crownprince, so that no one may forget what you once were?"

I think Walpurga will never speak again of her brilliant past. —————

At the death and funeral of the grandmother, I became better acquainted with the village schoolmaster. He has had rather a good education, only he boasts of it, and likes to bring out fine words that they may sound imposing, and seems to say, "See, you don't fully understand me." But the way in which he shared our sorrow with such true feeling, has increased my esti-

mation of him, and I have shown this candidly. And so one day he said to me: "Your skill in wood-carving is as good as a marriage-portion; you can get much money by it." I had no idea of what he intended by this.

It was revealed last Sunday.

He came dressed in his best black coat and white cotton gloves, and made me a formal proposal of marriage.

He would not at all believe me when I told him I would never marry, and he urgently repeated his offer, assuring me that he would only give it up if I loved another.

Happily Walpurga came to the rescue. The good man went home again as if shattered. Why must I still bring sorrow of heart to a poor being? Of my own I will not speak.

The matter with the schoolmaster follows me still.

Walpurga asked me why I wished to remain so solitary; if I did not wish to return any more to the great world, I might still make a good man happy, and could do much good to the children and poor people in the village. I have thus learned to know myself anew. I am not disposed to beneficence. I am no sister of mercy. I cannot visit sick people, whom I do not know, and do not love. I could have nursed and cherished the grandmother, but no one else. These peasant rooms are an aversion to me. I like not the dull atmosphere of these dwellings of simplicity. I am no beneficent fairy. My feelings are too easily wounded. I do not wish to make myself better than I am. No; to make myself better I

should truly like, but one can only make the good better, and this good is not within me. I must be honest. I could have lived better in a convent. This acknowledgment does not make me unhappy, but melancholy. This inordinate desire for enjoyment, for the indulgence of my feelings, is so strong.

Franz, Gundel's betrothed, has been summoned to join his regiment.

"There will be war with the French!" is the news brought by my little pitch-man from the town; and he informs me that now it will go badly with our business, as people will not buy any longer, and our employer will only pay the half of the price. So I will now work for store — I must also help to bear the burdens of the world.

It strikes me however as strange that I know nothing at all any longer of my country and my age. Still I have this one consolation: in these times of war they will not inquire after a lost one.

Every man, wherever he may be, is standing, unforeboded, on a height from which he does not see the signs of mortality. If one always saw them, there would be no work in the world and no song.

Forgetting oneself, or knowing oneself — around these, everything turns.

I see always before me, even in the hottest summer, the mountains with their peaks of snow. I do not know how to express it, but it always gives me a peculiarly mixed feeling. I am ever looking beyond

the marks of time, beyond the date of the seasons; I have all at once.

In my heart there is also a spot on which lies eternal snow.

This is now the third year of my life here. I have conceived a difficult resolve. I will go once again out into the world. I must see once more the scene of my past existence. I have severely tested myself.

Is it not a love of adventure, that common desire to gentle and simple, to undertake something unusual and perilous, and a wish perhaps to taste the horror of wandering through the world once more as one dead to it?

No, it is none of this! What is it then? An internal longing to roam abroad, if only for a few days. I must kill the longing, or the longing will kill me.

Whence arises this strong desire all at once?

Every instrument of my work burns my hand.

I must go!

I will not worry my mind with investigation. I will obey the impulse. I have no rules of an order; my own will is my law. I aggrieve no one by obeying it. I feel myself free; the world has no power over me.

I was afraid of communicating my intention to Walpurga. But when I did so, her tone, her words, her whole manner — aye! that she called me “child” for the first time — everything seemed to me as if her mother were still talking to me.

“Child!” said she, “thou’rt right. Go; it will be good for thee. I believe thou’lt come to us again, and wilt stay with us; but if thou don’t come back

again, and another life opens before thee, thou hast bitterly expiated — more bitterly than thou hast sinned."

My little pitch-man was very happy when it was settled that we would travel from Sunday to Sunday. When I asked him whether he was not curious to know whither we were going, he replied:

"It's all one to me! I'd travel with thee through the whole world, wherever thou wilt; and if thou driv'st me away, I'd go after thee like a dog and find thee."

We are going to set out. I will take my notebook with me; I will record every day.

(By the lake.) It is difficult to write down a single word.

The threshold I have to cross in going into the world, is my own gravestone.

I cannot conceive it.

How joyful was the walk towards the valley. The little pitch-man sang, and melodies even occurred to me; but I did not sing. Suddenly he interrupted himself and said:

"In the inns, you'll be my brother's daughter, won't you?"

"Yes."

"But you must also call me 'uncle' there."

"Of course, dear uncle."

He kept nodding to himself the whole way, and was full of happiness.

We came to the inn at the landing-place. He drank, and I drank too out of his glass.

"Where are you going?" asked the hostess.

"To the capital," said he; and I had not spoken with him at all about it. Then in a soft voice he said to me:

"If you wish to go elsewhere — the people don't need to know everything."

I left him alone.

I went to look for the place where I had wandered at that time. Here — here was the rock — a cross stood on it, and on the cross I read in gold characters:

"Here perished

"Irma, Countess von Wildenort,

"in the 21st year of her life.

"Traveller, pray for her, and honour
her memory."

I know not how long I lay there. When I revived, several people had gathered round me; among others, my little pitch-man, who was lamenting and bewailing.

I was able to walk to the inn, and my little pitch-man said to the people:

"My brother's girl ain't accustomed to go so far; she sits all the year through in the room; she's a wood-carver, and such a rare one!"

The people were all very kind to me. Many came to and fro into the inn-parlour, and they told the uncle how that the beautiful monument out yonder was a great advantage to the inn; for that in the summer there came hundreds of people, men and women, to visit the monument; and that a nun from the convent came every year with another nun, and prayed at the cross.

"And who put up the stone?" asked the little pitch-man.

"The brother of the unfortunate girl."

"No, the king!" cried others.

The conversation often broke off, but it always began again afresh.

I saw into a legend in process of formation. Some said the place was still haunted, for at the same time a beautiful creature, called black Esther, had also drowned herself — she was a daughter of Zenza, a crazed old woman, living on the other side of the lake; and who knows whether the beautiful lady, for she was very beautiful, hadn't drowned herself too? On the other hand, the hostess asserted angrily that the countess had had about her many gold chains and diamonds, and especially a diamond star on her forehead, and the horse had been seen which had thrown her, and her brother had wanted to shoot the horse on account of it, but that the horse had been bewitched, and that from that day it would eat nothing, till it had died. Others again told how that the father of the countess had commanded her to drown herself, and that she had been an obedient child, and had done so.

"And why was the father said to have commanded that?" inquired the little pitch-man.

"Because she loved a married man. We mayn't talk of that."

"We may, though," whispered a sailor to him. "She and the king were fond of each other, and to avoid getting into trouble, she drowned herself."

How can I say how I felt during all this talking?

Perhaps years hence, some solitary child will cross

the lake, and sing a song of the beautiful countess with the diamond star on her brow.

I know not when night came, and how I fell asleep. I awoke and still heard the song of the drowned countess. It had sounded to me in my dreams, but in such a sad deep strain. All that I had gone through seemed to me like a dream. I looked out of the window — I looked across the lake, and yonder shone the golden letters in the light of morning.

What should I do? Should I turn back?

My little pitch-man was happy when he saw me so fresh again. The hostess offered me a picture of the monument, which was bought by all travellers. My uncle negotiated the matter, and got it for half the price demanded, and presented it to me. I carry the picture of my grave-stone on my breast.

I felt impelled to wander by a second grave. It was that of my father. I laid my hand on the mound, and something said within me: "Thou wilt be reconciled — I expiate and atone for my guilt."

How all the spots of remembrance agitated me! I cannot note it down — my heart is breaking. I feel besides that it is beating with a constant fear. I will cut short my account. I will not continue these notes. I will never again look at these pages. . . .

We wandered to the Frauen-lake; we crossed over to the convent. Among the nuns I saw my beloved Emmy, who yearly makes a pilgrimage to my grave-stone. I prayed with her here in the chapel for the first time since many years. What difference does it make, whether one still lives or is dead, if only the thought . . .

I write with a trembling hand, but I will . . .

When I left the convent, and re-crossed the lake, and was again in the open air, the thought seized me: "I expiate freely! That is my last pride! My will holds me as fast as the bolts in the convent, and I — I work . . ."

Everything was carried out as I had determined. I saw the great world once more, and bid it adieu.

We travelled to the capital. How the noise and the carriages frightened me!

When I heard a silk gown rustle again for the first time, the sound quite affected me. And when I first saw a lady in a fashionable bonnet and veil, I felt impelled to accost her. These people in the cultivated world seemed to belong to me. It is like coming out of the lower regions into sunlight.

I read the announcements at the street corners. Is this the same world in which I live?

The one amuses the other; there is music, singing, &c. They find none of the joys of life within themselves.

The world is a chain of connexion. Thou hast lost the link.

I saw the city bustle in the morning, sitting in a small inn.

The houses here and there — my life passes before me like a phantom. If people knew — There are streets here with which I am not acquainted. All go carelessly by. The men in the town all look so dull; no sunny, happy face has yet met me.

I was in the picture gallery. Oh, this pleasure of drawing in through the eye; this intoxication of colour; this solemn stillness! I saw and heard my old teacher

speaking to a stranger: "It is not the historical grandeur of the subject and its compass which gives a work of art its great historic character, but it is that the artist places himself in the great historic scene, and places us there too; the same subject may be variously conceived, transiently in the genre style, or historically enduring, and grandly represented . . ."

Like one intoxicated, I passed through the rooms. All my old friends greeted me, clothed in their enduring colouring; they remain true and unchanged. Nature and art are true, that is their power, but they speak not, they only exist. No — nature alone is mute, art is speaking nature. The human mind speaks not alone by the lips. It seemed to me as if the *Maria Egyptiaca* must suddenly turn her head and ask me: "Dost thou know me now?"

I grew dizzy and fearful.

I sat long in the Raphael hall as in another world, and the highest beauty which earth has known, conceived as it is here by the purest mind, surrounded me.

A thought passed through my mind, making me happy: it is by art that men first become free, in it there begins a second joy-creating life, and — what is still greater — it is a supreme kingdom, which any one may enter when summoned; the poor son of the people says: In these noble and blessed abodes I and my mind will dwell — and he works here eternally, in the free atmosphere of ancestral humanity. Here is immortality, or rather everlasting life. In the father's house of free art-creation, there is infinite space and an eternal home. He who has lived happily has entered here.

I stood by the palace. The windows were open of the rooms where I once lived. My parrot was still there in his lacquered cage, and he called out: "Good day! good day!" He does not add my name. He has forgotten it.

For the first time for years I have seen a paper again; it lay before me on the table. It was long before I could resolve to read it; at length I did so. I there read:

"His Majesty the king, accompanied by the prime minister von Bronnen (therefore Bronnen is minister), Count von Wildenort, master of the horse (my brother, therefore), and the physician in ordinary, privy counsellor Dr. Sixtus (thus my noble friend Gunther must be dead), is gone to a watering-place for six weeks."

How much do these few lines say to me! I needed not to read further. — There stood, however, after them:

"Her Majesty the queen has removed to the summer palace with his Royal Highness the crownprince."

I walked about the town, stood at the shop-windows, and looked at all the things which I no longer require. In one window, I found my carved things exposed for sale. "That's our work," exclaimed the little pitch-man; and he went boldly into the shop, inquired the price, and by whom the things had been made. We heard a high price named, and the shopman added: "These works of art" — yes, he called them works of art — "are done by a half-crazy girl in the mountains."

I looked at my little pitch-man. He was terribly

afraid for me, and his glance begged me, as it were, not to become deranged here in a strange place. He had indeed good ground for this fear; for with all my self-command, my whole behaviour must have appeared strange to my faithful conductor.

I bought some little plaster of Paris casts from Greek gems; I shall now have ever before me models of perfect beauty. It required some art to purchase such unusual things; I only ventured to do it in the twilight.

I saw many faces which I knew, but I always looked quickly away. Only to the good Mademoiselle Kramer would I gladly have spoken; she is grown old, very old; she was carrying a book stamped with the yellow shield of the circulating library — how many thousand books has that good woman read! She reads through books just as men smoke cigars.

I went to the physician's house. The court-yard door stood open; it was now a manufactory. The beautiful trees were felled.

On the head of the figure of Victory at the arsenal, sat a dove with glossy plumage. I saw the statue distinctly without an eye-glass.

The evening brought me a pure delight; the purest I have ever experienced, and, I believe, ever shall experience.

Mozart's "Zauberflöte" was performed in the theatre.

I went with my little pitch-man. We sat in the uppermost gallery. The house was very full, and there were of course many people there whom I knew. I saw no one. I saw, and heard, and floated, as it were, in the magic scene.

Midnight is past. I live with my little pitch-man in a sort of waggoner's inn; I cannot get rest; I must put down in words what I have felt.

Mozart's "Zauberflöte" is one of those eternal creations belonging to a pure atmosphere, to the other side of all human passion and struggle. I have often heard how childish the text is, but on this height all action, all events, all personages, all the surroundings, can only be allegorical. All that is hard and circumscribed is removed, man becomes a bird, a pure natural life, he becomes love and wisdom. The childlike character, *aye!* even the childish character of the text is according to nature; it is only over-excited people who can find it tedious and tasteless.

It is the last dramatic work of Mozart, and he revives in it his highest nature, all the fulness of his genius, as though he were already elevated to heavenly glory. He reviews his separate figures, they become new, less fixed and characteristic, but all the more pure and ethereal. In the best sense of the word, there is something supernatural in the way in which he has here collected and brought together the figures and things elsewhere scattered.

The entrance-chorus of the priests is the march of humanity, and the chorus, "Oh Isis!" conveys the sunny blessedness of peace. Here is the realization of paradise, a life above the world, whither music alone can bear one into the free ether, raised above all storms and tempests.

I have hovered here for hours, and I know not how I have come down below again; and countless thoughts float around me. In this music there is a

sublime self-conscious repose, nothing of oppressed humility; it is like an unfading blooming life; no, it is the fragrance of ripe fruit.

Mozart's last work has a fellow in Lessing's last work, "Nathan the Wise." Far away above the shattered, struggling world, the mind soars and lives in that pure world, in that realization of peace and piety, where there is only a smile bestowed on the vexations of men in their weakness and finiteness. The great treasure of humanity is not buried in a past, it must be dug out of the future, and fashioned and created.

In both "Nathan" and the "Zauberflöte" there are splendid gems; they both show that happiness is no delusion, and that he who, while in the actual world, does not bear within him a sense of things above this earth, can conceive it not.

To have lived such hours is the blessedness of life.

The three boys are singing divine happiness. If the angels in Raphael's Sistine Madonna were singing, they would be airs like this — their voices would be pitched in this strain.

They are sounds, such as I should like to hear in my dying hour, making dissolution blissful.

Could one only but enjoy the unbroken continuance of such exquisite delight!

I sat for a long time in the park after the opera, with night and silence all around me.

Thus fully absorbed with this music, I should like to fly back to my forest solitude, knowing nothing further of the world, and silently passing away; no other voice should touch and disturb me more.

I had nevertheless to return to the world.

Here I am now sitting late in the night, the whole world lying in repose and self-forgetfulness, and I am awake in repose and self-forgetfulness!

Oh, ye eternal spirits, could one but be with you, and thus utter a word, a single sound from one's life into eternity! There, in the gallery, eyes never closed look upon generations as they come and go; and here, harmonies are sounding and words are echoing that can never die away . . .

Oh, ye blessed spirits, ye who create a second world in art! The world, as it is, perplexes us. You clear up the perplexity. You are the blessed genii who offer mankind ever and ever the wine of life in a golden chalice, and it is never exhausted though millions partake of the draught.

With deep regret I quit this brilliant and harmonious kingdom of colour and sound. This alone I feel deprived of.

There was yet my last halt.

We wandered to the summer palace. We walked up and down before the park-railing. I saw the ladies of the court sitting over their embroidery on the ornamental chairs under the weeping-ash near the chapel. Ah, how many are sitting there, and are no better than I; and they laugh and jest, and are happy and honoured. This is our misery; we always deafen our consciences and say: Look around; others are no better than we.

Presently they rose and bowed low. The iron gates were opened, and the queen drove out with the prince beside her. She looked at me and the little pitch-man, and bowed. Sight failed me.

I know not — did I see aright? The queen looked cheerful.

The prince has grown a fine boy; he has retained all the promise of his infancy.

My little pitch-man conversed with the stone-breaker by the roadside. The man praised the queen much, and her only child, the crownprince. So she has only one child.

I was so weary; I was obliged to sit down by the wayside. There I sat on the road, where I had once so proudly driven. Well and good! It is good that it is so.

My little pitch-man was happy when I said to him: "Now let us go homewards again." He must have had his fears about me; he must in secret have thought: People are not so wrong, when they assert that she is not quite sound.

Those who do not see me, think me dead, and those who do see me, think me crazed.

I was firmly resolved, had I been discovered, to acknowledge everything to the king and queen, and then to return quietly back to my asylum.

It is better as it is.

We returned home.

When I reached our mountain again, and began to ascend it, I asked myself: Is this thy home? And yet — this absence makes it a new home to me. I live a true life here.

It is a weight from my heart that I have noted down all this. While I was writing it, I often felt as giddy as if I were standing on a precipice. But I will remain firm. I will not look at these pages again.

Now again my hands must work industriously, and I must banish all thoughts of repentance from my mind! The next minute is ours; that now flowing by, is scarcely so; and the past, not at all.

Much work is awaiting me. It is well. And Walpurga and the children are very glad that I am here again.

While I was away, Walpurga had my room painted a pale red; utterly tasteless, and yet I must be thankful. She thought too, that I should not return.

I could have left these people any day, and yet they are my whole world. Will it be so, when I shall one day leave the world entirely?

With courage to do without the world — I think I have once read the expression; now I understand it, I feel it in myself, I am carrying it out. Not desponding, and not sad. With courage.

I am no longer sad; a silent satisfaction in renunciation makes me free.

When I look at life, wherefore all these efforts and struggles, and all these barriers until that final barrier — death? The heroes of history and my little pitchman — none has an advantage beyond another. No one has a complete, clear, pure, fulfilled destiny.

My old Jochem prayed daily, often for hours, and then again he would abuse men and his destiny; and I have seen cultivated women enthusiastically revelling in Beethoven's music, and immediately afterwards disputing vulgarly about nothing.

The idea follows me: With courage to do without.

I thank thee, good spirit, for the words, whoever thou art. To live through the day without saddening it with the knowledge that the night will come; — with courage to resign — that is everything.

I could never have believed that I could have lived without happiness, without joy. Now I see that I can do so. Happiness and joy are not the conditions of my life.

It lies in our own power to attune the mind to cheerfulness; I mean, to calmness and clearness.

How many years was it that Hermione, in the "Winter's Tale," remained concealed. I have quite forgotten.

Ever in my work now, the airs and tunes occur to me, the solos and grand united songs, and the accompanying instrumental parts in Mozart's "Zauberflöte." They echo round me through the silent air, and bear me along.

Above all, that appeal: "Be steadfast!" with the three short notes D E D, and the burst of trumpets that follows, is ever sounding in my ears, and is like some spiritual watchword. The highest doctrines should be conveyed alone by music. That penetrates and endures. "Be steadfast!"

Again I am trying to investigate the enigma of life.

Man may not do everything which he can, and to which he feels impelled; as soon as he is a man, he must recognize the limits of his right, before he reaches the limits of his power.

How often was the saying discussed at court:

"Right goes before might!" I have re-melted the expression in the burning furnace of my thoughts, and have coined it anew.

How beautiful is the story of paradise! Man placed there, everything allowed him within the sphere of his power, save one single thing — and the fruit allures. But there is no paradise. The beast alone possesses that which we can call paradise; it does what it can do. As soon as a prohibition exists — and man, as a moral being, must know of such — there is no more paradise, no perfect freedom.

I mean it thus: By overstepping the barrier, we arrive at self-consciousness. This is to take of the tree of knowledge. From that moment, man's enjoyment arises no longer of itself, he must create it out of himself, out of the surrounding world; then begins his wrestling with nature and with himself — his life becomes action. Work is the second creation — work for his own perfection and for the world.

My whole thought appears to me as though it were a stammering articulation towards the great words of knowledge.

I now see the little world around me, and the so-called great world, which I still have in remembrance, as though radiant with sunlight.

To know the barriers, to perceive the necessity of the law — that is liberty. I am free.

I have done rightly in having been again in the world; or do I only discover that I have done rightly, because I feel it as well done? I have been since then more free. I am not the poor soul who longed to revisit the earth, and I do not live in a hell. I could return

again to the world without fearing it. I can now freely resign it, and it is scarcely any longer a resignation. Oh, how presumptuous the belief that others need us! I too need no one any more.

A telegraph line is being drawn past my forest-view. So now the great doings of the world are passing by me. I can see the men winding the telegraph-wires on the high poles.

Walpurga says that my voice sounds so hoarse; but I feel no pain. It probably arises from the fact of my speaking so little; often days without a word. I drink in this cool pure air every morning as a refreshing draught, and the blue of the sky is much more intense up here.

The physician told me once with justice that I was of a rhythmical nature. If it were not so, I should now be conceiving my innermost life in melodious words — my thoughts in reality only find their true home in poetry; so complete, so happy, so free is it within me.

Hansei has been now long in the possession of everything, but a sense of gratitude seems ever awakening anew in him: that he can buy beautiful cows, that he can have beautiful bells for them, it all makes him happy, and this gratitude in happiness gives his rough exterior an inward softness.

(28th August.) After long sunless days of death-like torpor, this bright clear sky to-day above the snowy mountain peaks and the sap green nearer

ranges and valleys, make me feel as if I must fly away and rove through the universe; but I sit still and work, my work was faithful to me in the gloomy days, and I will be faithful to it in bright ones. I will only wander out at evening, when work is over.

This is Göthe's birthday. I think Göthe would have been kind to me, had I lived in his time and society.

There is something beautiful in it, that we know the hour at which he was born. It was about noon. I write this at the very hour, thinking of him.

What would he have counselled me for my lost life?

Is it lost? — It is not lost.

That was a triumphal festival: Franz has returned from the festival of the shooters' company as a hero. He gained the highest prize, a beautiful rifle. The target drilled with holes is hung in front of our house.

Such is a falling leaf in the autumn — how many bright summer days and cool nights fostered its growth, and what is it, when it hangs on the tree, and now, when it falls?

And what is the result of a whole human life, reduced to a few sentences?

How high does our farm lie above the level of the sea? I do not know, and Hansei would smile, that one can ask such a question. One does one's duty on the spot where one lives. How does that stream of influence flow out into the great whole, into the mighty sea, — the history of mankind? It is ordained without our interference. The stream turns

the mill and waters the meadows on its living way, till the sea receives it, and then the clouds and the storms proceed from the evaporated waters, and they feed the stream.

In everything I have acquired, everything which I have learned, practised, done, thought, during the course of these years, I always appear to myself as a block of wood — I know not what is to be fashioned out of me. Who makes me into anything? I must do it myself.

I have got a beautiful piece of work, a work which will endure, one which will not pass away, but which will constantly give me pleasure — it is a work for our house.

At the rebuilding of the dwelling house, I assisted the carpenter, in giving a greater symmetry to the whole, the verandah running round the house had a freer roofing and the wooden balustrade received a more attractive form.

Hansei has often said what a beautiful pasture, the place in the forest where the trees are felled, would make. Yesterday he came home and said:

“I have it! I have had the trees cut down on the mountain declivity, and four beautiful stems I have left standing, just in a square, and there I’ll have a hut built, and then we shall have a pasture of our own; the farm can’t thrive without a pasture of its own. It is indeed far off, a good two hours’ walk further up, but we see the opening in the wood from here.”

He is quite happy that he can accomplish it.

“And think,” said Hansei, “now that we have cut

down the wood in front, we can see ever so far, we can see our home lake. It is indeed only a little sparkling spot of blue, but it looks at one so friendly, like some faithful eye from our home, which has known one from youth up. It was very beautiful there. But it is still more beautiful here, and we will not sin with ingratitude."

I have now made some designs for our pasture-lut. My little pitch-man is very skilful in cutting everything. We join timbers and saw for our Noah's Ark, and are as merry as apprentices.

I am chiselling also, for the first time, a horse's head, as large as life, for the gable of the roof.

I was up yonder with Hansei, looking at the site of our new pasture.

I feel to-day after the fresh mountain ascent, as if I had witnessed the beginning of existence: a new road, a new dwelling house, where no human being had before been. I feel as if I had nothing more to experience; I feel as free, as if all the burdens of earth were loosening their hold of me.

To wake in the morning after a great effort, after a wearisome mountain ascent. The fatigue has passed away and only the feeling of refreshment remains, with a sense too of having tested that I have elasticity and can exact something from myself. And all round me, my past life greets me, which I had left for a while, when I possessed nothing but myself alone — I can imagine the peacefulness of those, who can thus realize the waking to eternal life.

There is nothing in the pasture-hut, everything is still bare, only in the corner hangs the picture of our Saviour, waiting solitarily for the human beings, who are to come there. It is and it will ever be a blessing for humanity, that they have the image of a pure being, which they can carry into solitude and upon mountain heights. A perfect and higher civilization, a great history, thus takes possession of the new world.

If only the pure knowledge of the pure spirit be linked with it.

(October.) Now that winter is coming, I am always thinking of the solitary pasture-hut up yonder. In my dreams, I am always there, alone, living a strange life. I think I must go up there next spring. To be a whole summer long only with plants and beasts, with mountains and streams, with sun, moon, and stars — I feel that I shall only have completely lived, when I have lived in that manner.

Art thou then not yet satiated and satisfied, thou unsatiated, unsatisfied heart? Still always longing for something else? What is it?

I must have repose. I will.

He who, to be happy, needs nothing but himself, is happy.

I am here again a true human being.

A human being in himself is pure, unstained, and out of him comes the world. Here lies a secret. I will not name it.

It makes me happy, that I shall be still higher up, still higher in the mountains, still more in solitude, still

more quiet. It seems to me as if something called me there — it is no voice, it is no sound. I know not what it is, and yet it calls me, it draws me, it allures me, come! come! Yes, I come.

I know that I am not dying but I rather doubt that I am living. The world is no longer an enigma.

On the mountain height I survey in thought those whom I have wronged in my life: thee, my father, and thee, my queen, and most of all, myself.

Of all things in the world, falsehood avenges itself most. When I wrote at that time to the king from the convent, I boasted of my truth, and yet was thoroughly untrue. I wished to effect an act of liberty, and in reality I wished only to write to him and make myself appear admirable with my feeling of liberty. I was proud that I could oppose the common opinion, and in reality I wished to shine in his eyes as his strong friend. He refused my advice, and yet it was I, who opened the convents again.

Falsehood avenges itself.

It is only when one is thoroughly true, that there can be purity and freedom.

If I could only put into words the delight I felt at sunset this evening. It is now night, and as surely as the sun beamed on my face, so surely does a ray of sunlight beam within me. I am a ray out of eternity. What are days and years in comparison with it? What is a whole human life? —

I did not rightly know what I desired, why ever restless and longing, I looked forward from the present to the next hour, to the next day, to the next year, hoping for something, which I could not find. It was not love, for that satisfies not. I wanted to live in the present moment, and yet could not. It was always as if something were calling me, as if something were waiting outside the door. What was it?

I know now. I desired to be within myself, to understand myself, myself in the world and the world in me.

The vain being is the really solitary being. He has always a longing to be seen, understood, acknowledged, admired, and loved.

There is much that I could now say about it, for I was once vain myself. Only in my real solitude, have I overcome the loneliness of vanity.

It is enough for me that I exist.

How far removed is this from all seeming!

Now I understand my father's act. He did not wish to punish me, he only wished to awaken me, to bring me to the consciousness of myself, and this consciousness frees me and teaches me to become otherwise.

I understand the inscription on my father's library:
"When I am alone, then am I least alone."

Yes, when alone, one can best and most purely plunge oneself in universal being. I have lived and apprehended truth. I can die.

He who is one with himself, is everything.

What people will say — in these words there lies the tyranny of the world, the whole destruction of our natural disposition, the oblique vision of our minds. 'These four words' bear sway everywhere. Even Walpurga stands under the dominion of this tyrant, while Hansei obeys quite another influence, the only true one — he knows it not like the physician, but he acts just like him.

Man has the single and primary duty of preserving the repose of his mind. All that is external to him, that terrible "What will people say?" does not concern him. This question makes the mind homeless. Do right and fear no one, thou may'st be sure that with all thy consideration for the world, thou wilt never satisfy the world. But if thou goest straight forwards on thy way, not concerning thyself with the friendly or unfriendly glances of men, then thou hast conquered the world, and it is subject to thee. By heeding the question, "What will people say?" thou becomest subject to the world.

I think I now know what I have done. I have no mercy towards myself. Here is my full confession.

I have fallen into sin — not against nature, but against the regulations of the world. Is that a sin? Yonder stands the forest with its tall pine trees. The higher the tree grows, the more do the lower branches die away, smothered by the thick growth around. The tree in the forest, protected and sheltered by its fellows, cannot live to the utmost in all its branches.

I wished to live to the utmost, and yet to remain in the forest, in the world, in society. He who wishes

to live to the utmost fully and entirely ought only to be a solitary being. In the society of the world, we are, as human beings, no longer creatures of nature. Nature and morality have equal rights, and must be brought to a peaceful compact with each other. And where there are two with equal rights, neither can indulge its full right, each must make concessions to the other.

In this lies my sin.

He who will indulge nature alone, must withdraw from the protection of morality. I desired neither the one nor the other entirely. Hence I was shattered and broken into fragments.

My father was right in his last act. He avenged the law of morality, which is just as human as the law of nature. The animal world knows no father nor mother, so soon as the young is independent. The human world knows them, and must hold them sacred.

It is all now clear to me. I suffer and expiate justly. I was a thief, I stole the highest treasures: confidence, love, honour, respect, and splendour.

How excellent and exalted do the tender souls appear to themselves, when a poor rogue has stolen something and is sent in consequence to the house of correction. But what are all the possessions, which can be stolen by the hand, to those that are intangible?

It is not always the basest human beings, who stand before a court of justice.

I acknowledge my sin, and I expiate it truly.

That I dissembled, that I denied and palliated what I wished to let pass as a right of nature, this is my fatal sin, and for this I expiate. I have committed the greatest sin against the queen. She is for me the repre-

sentative of that moral order, which I violated and yet wished to enjoy.

To thee, oh queen, to thee, thou sweet, good, deeply injured one, to thee I confess all this.

If I die before thee — and I hope it — these pages are to be delivered to thee, queen.

We cannot be subjects to nature alone. He who obeys his law of nature, has no share in the historical world, no heritage; for him, no one has lived before him, no one has prepared, as it were, his existence; his whole nature is born with him, and with him it dies. He who obeys the law of nature alone, and persuades himself that he is doing right, is a denier of humanity; he denies that there is a history of the human race, of which he alone is not the only representative, but which was before him and is without him. The denier of humanity is, in spite of all varnish, only a savage, he stands without, everything which he does and produces and enjoys, connected with culture, he has stolen; he should sing no song but the natural effusion of his own voice; like the bird, which brings with him into the world his plumage and his song, having no especial garb and no especial melody, for all in him is species, all is the law of nature.

In this alone lies truth.

And above all right and all duty, there stands love, leading the loved one and ourself to the pure unfolding of their nature.

Alas for those, who violate the divine gift of love.

My father's fate is now also plain to me.

He wished to live for himself, to perfect himself, and yet he had children in the world, and he demanded the love and adherence of these children. He died from the terrible consequence of his life. This does not however make me innocent, and he dealt with me justly.

I will not excuse myself in anything or before any one. I will be true to the utmost limit. That is my happiness and my pride.

Only what thou art in thyself, determines thy value, not what thou hast.

I have found the true centre round which my mind revolves.

In the last few days it seems to me always, though I know not whence the idea comes to me, as if my father's terrible punishment had never taken place, as if he had not executed it, as if it all were only the work of my imagination, the dream of my mind, because I had deserved it.

Why does this thought come to me so suddenly and will not leave me?

I know, I know. Whatever may have happened, it is atoned for. There is a renewal of life, a deliverance achieved out of ourselves. It is mine, I feel it, I am free, I can return to the world and unbind the bandage from my brow.

To the world? And what is the world? I have

the world here with me, within me, and I am in the world and the world is in me. I am.

To-day for the first time I have sung again. Oh, what good it did me. No one heard me but myself alone.

No bird sings for itself, it sings for its mate. Man alone sings for himself and thinks for himself, and is conscious of himself.

The stillness of morning was always agreeable to me, now the stillness of morning seems to last for me all day long.

The stream yonder often rushes along with a sudden noise, the wind catches it unexpectedly, and bears the undulations of sound to me.

(At my work.) When the material his brittle one learns to make a virtue of necessity. I often come to ramifications, which necessitate new beauties or deformities. I often bring out of a piece of wood, touches which I did not intend, and those I did intend become quite different, just because the piece of wood is also master and not merely my hand. The blessed friend in need, varnish, covers beauties and defects.

We make nothing; we only form and discover what is already there, but which without our assistance cannot release itself from shapeless chaos.

Ah, I feel as if I now understood the whole world and all art and work. I seem so filled with the infinite.

I know now, where lies the whole difference between thinking as a whole and living in part.

Hansei, Walpurga, the king, the queen, the physician, Emmy, — what are they? Drops in the sea of humanity. I forget them, while I imagine myself in the whole. This loosens the love for the individual being, longing and enjoyment ceases, but also all passion, all heartache.

And what then am I? What then remains to me? The whole, the great, the universe, we can apprehend, the individual being we must love, I can only love the nearest, and the nearest to me is God, the great soul of universal law.

Walpurga is now so anxious about me; she often comes and it seems as if she wanted to say something, she looks at me so strangely and yet she remains silent. She is always coming back again to the same point; how beautiful it is on the pasturage up yonder, and how happy and quiet I should be there. She would like the mountains to be already free of snow, she wants to have me away, and she says, I shall get strong. And I do not really feel ill. She is always saying: You look so radiant.

It may be that something radiates from me, for I feel so calm, so thoroughly settled with the world. I could now fear nothing from the world, I could again live among men, I feel myself free, nothing wounds me more.

I have a desire to be still more solitary. Shall I find up yonder a still deeper, a more secluded, a more noiseless solitude? I always feel as if something were

calling me, as if I heard the words: quite alone (mutter-seelenallein). Oh, thou blessed German language!

What a blessing it is, that I can carry with me without trouble the whole wealth of my mother tongue; and when it gushes forth out of all the corners of thought, I have always some word-vessel which I can place below to receive the idea. I feel as if I must always be speaking and writing and rejoicing over this possession, and as if I can scarcely stop.

I must break off. The most mysterious dreamy thoughts are like a bird on a twig: he sings, but if he sees an eye watching him, he flies away.

I now know accurately the season of the year, and often even the hours, by watching how the sunbeams in the morning first fall upon my room and on my work bench; my chisel especially, which hangs before me on the wall, is my indicator.

The spring showers now drizzle through the trees — so is it with me. It seems as if I must still experience a new delight. What is it? I will quietly wait.

I feel so strange, as if I were lifted up with the chair on which I am sitting, and were flying, flying away, I know not whither.

What is it? I feel it, I am living in eternity.

And everything flows to me, the sunlight and the sunshine, the rustling of the forest and the forest air, and all human beings of all times and of all forms — everything with me is so beautiful; as though clothed in summer's garb.

I am.

I am in God.

If I could only now die in this blissful elevation of feeling, in this sense of deliverance and dissolution.

But I will still live, till my hour comes.

Come, thou dark hour, when thou wilt, thou art light to me!

There is light within me, I feel it. Oh eternal spirit of all worlds, I am one with thee!

I was dead and I live — I shall die and yet live.

All is pardoned and blotted out — it was dust on my wings — I shall soar upwards to the sun, into universal infinity. I shall die singing, singing from the fulness of my heart!

Enough!

I know I shall be again gloomy, sad, dragging along a wearisome existence; but once having soared into infinity, and felt a ray of it within me — I shall never lose it more.

Now I should like to go into a convent; into some quiet cloister, knowing nothing of the world, living on within myself, until death calls me. But it is not to be. I am to live and to work freely, to live with my fellow beings and to work for them.

The work of my hands and the power of my imagination belongs to them; but what I am in myself, is my own and mine alone.

I have taken farewell of everything here, of my quiet room, of my summer-seat — I know not, if I shall return; and if I do return, who knows whether everything may not have become strange to me.

(Last page, written in pencil.)

When I am dead, I desire that I may be buried thus, — enveloped in a simple linen cloth, in a rude unplanned coffin, and placed in the ground under the apple-tree on the road to my father's house.

Let my death be at once announced to my brother or other existing relatives; they must let me be buried there on the wayside.

No stone and no name shall mark my grave.

E I G H T H B O O K.

FIRST CHAPTER.

Gunther was dismissed. Satiated with experience he quitted the turmoil of the world, with its dissipating influences.

It was no small matter to transplant a home which had been so long rooted, and which possessed so many fibres of attachment; but it was done without injury to its own stability. The two pure prevailing spirits, love and science, followed Gunther over the mountains, and no feeling of resentment lurked within his heart.

The circle was completed. As from some circumnavigating voyage, Gunther returned to his starting point; he knew that in himself and in his wife and children, there was sufficient self-dependent strength for them to find in themselves all that was ennobling and elevating to the mind. They lacked indeed the atmosphere of a cultivated circle, where one both receives and gives, thus sharing in a higher social life; but he believed himself and his family able to stand the test, without suffering from the privation.

Immediately after his dismissal from the court, he had received the most honourable call to a large university. He refused it. For years he had determined to fill up various defects in his knowledge; and to carry out many scientific works, now only in outline; he had often seen with regret the probability

of his quitting this life, without having attained to the completion he aimed at, and leaving behind him works still unfinished. For this is the frittering characteristic of court life, that it breaks up into a hundred pieces the ordinary frame of mind, and interrupts the chain of thought. To mount guard every morning as it were, with all its pomp and pageantry, to be ready at any chosen hour, to drill all one's conversation into court usage — such a life, continued for years, inevitably tends to injure the inner nature, in spite of all self-defence and self-management.

Gunther possessed both the blessing and the strength, of having a home and a science, which kept him ever endowed with fresh vigour; but still he often saw with alarm the possibility of frittering away his existence in the gradual loss of his own personality; he submitted readily to a little form and state, indeed he acknowledged it as necessary and noble, because there lay in it, a remnant of that mental and stately discipline which linked mankind together, and counteracted all division produced by incongruity. But at the same time Gunther had been desirous of strictly preserving the physiognomy of his own nature, for this he often repeated with emphasis: He who permits his sentiments and his nature to be changed, is subdued and killed by the world, and continues to exist no longer as himself.

The strict and almost inflexible deportment, which was often remarked in him, lay in the fact, that he daily came to the court out of another world. He was however forbearing towards the superficialities and merely courteous externals of this sphere, for he knew

that where nature or education do not of themselves produce an unceasing spring, there must necessarily be an arrangement for the passing hour and the whole tenor of life generally resolves itself into the daily events of a select circle.

But Gunther's so called stiffness arose also from the fact that he never misplaced the gravitating point of his existence, so that if any prop around him tottered or fell, and ruin seemed near, he ever stood firm and secure. When now suddenly, although really not unexpectedly, the break occurred, he could lay aside the privy-counsellor and remain the doctor. Gunther had quickly overcome every trace of ill-humour at his sudden and abrupt overthrow. He was sorry to be obliged to leave his numerous friends in the capital, and the queen above all; there was much in which he could still have been useful to her; but again he said to himself, how good and necessary it was for the queen to strengthen herself without the assistance of another.

Thus Gunther had withdrawn from the capital. One ideal of his life was now fulfilled; he was living again in the little town in which he had been born.

Now, when he was nearly entering his 70th year, he regarded the time yet allotted to him, as the evening of rest, after having borne with honour and credit the burden of his manhood. He desired as far as possible, so to regulate the account of his knowledge, that death might not surprise him in the midst of much that was only just begun.

Some years before, Gunther had built a modest house in his native town, which served as a summer resort for his family, so long as his children were

young. This was now to be the last resting point of his life; Frau Gunther and the children had cheerfully bid farewell to the long familiar neighbourhood; they left friends who were dear to them, but their true life was at home, and this home with all its visible and invisible treasures, went with them into their new abode.

Gunther had only one sister in the little highland town. She was an active hostess. Brother William had always been the idol of the family, and the sister, like the mother, as long as she had lived, — the father who had been a country physician, had died just when Gunther was entering the university — had always thought of William, as of some bold and successful navigator on the sea of life. The sister now with her grown-up sons and daughters, had helped to put things comfortably in order, and Gunther's agreeable home was soon the central point of the little town, and was almost of as much importance as the palace with its royal inmates in the capital.

Esteem and gratitude stood as invisible guards at the door, and the respectful mode of entering invariably observed, shewed plainly that the threshold of this house could only be passed over with decorum.

The hostess of the Rose, Gunther's sister, stood in a more honourable position, and when two of her sons and a daughter were betrothed in quick succession, it was looked on as an especial and inestimable happiness, to become related to the privy-counsellor. Every stranger who entered the town was sure soon to hear what a famous man it reckoned among its citizens, and with what elegance his house was appointed.

There was a peaceful atmosphere in Gunther's house, as in a temple of science and beauty; it was difficult to decide whether it was more agreeable here in summer or in winter. In the summer indeed it was less observable, how its occupants understood the embellishments of life; if the gardens in other houses were not so well arranged, the seats not so easy and retired, the points of view, not so artistically chosen; still the fresh green of trees and shrubberies, and the distant view was the same in all. But in the winter when man makes himself happy at home and has nothing but the little world which he has formed and arranged around himself, then only is it seen what men can produce from their surroundings, when light and warmth dwell within themselves.

Had a frozen traveller come down from the snowy mountains into the little highland town, and suddenly entered Gunther's house, he would have imagined that he had descended upon an island of civilization.

Salve stood over the threshold of the house, the architecture of which was an improvement upon the usual style of the country. The roof projected considerably, for it was necessary to prevent the snow resting before the windows; but this protecting roof was decorated with tasteful carvings. The steps were filled with winter plants, the walls were adorned with plaster of Paris copies from the Parthenon, the rooms were prettily arranged, every article of furniture was so well disposed, that it seemed to say I stand in my right place, and above them there hung good engravings of the choicest pictures, with statuettes between them of the great men of all ages, and every where small works of art in plaster, marble, and bronze, which had been

sent to the famous physician by his admirers, especially those of the fair sex; in the little town they talked much of two stuffed bears which lay on the ground as a warm *couvre-pied*, and which had been presented by a Russian Princess.

The temperature of the rooms was nowhere extreme, it was of that agreeable sort that was equally suitable to man and plant. Beautiful large-leaved plants were placed in the windows and in the corner of the room. On a rich bracket surrounded by flowers stood a marble bust of Gunther, the work of Irma's master some years before.

As a famous ladies' doctor, Gunther was in constant correspondence with many of the higher classes. Occasionally during the summer some of these came and remained, paying short or long visits to the little town. The hostess of the Rose had two houses besides her hotel, and these were conducted by two of her children, under her own strict superintendence; and here the invalid strangers dwelt during their sojourn. Gunther gave up a great part of the practice to a young physician, who had married the second daughter of the hostess of the Rose, retaining the supervision himself.

The little town blessed its distinguished and beneficent citizen. The best things always found their way to Gunther's house: the choicest fish from the stream, the best of the game, every early vegetable, every beautiful specimen of fruit was brought to his house, and Frau Gunther had only to prevent its being overstocked. Even the servants of the house were held in honour. Since they had come into the little town, they had made no change in their household, for all endeavoured

to make themselves agreeable; even Gunther's dog and mule, which he had procured for his mountain expeditions, were regarded with pleasure.

SECOND CHAPTER.

It was in the early spring.

Frau Gunther and her two daughters were sitting at the open window working; at their feet a fair-haired child of about five years old was playing, and the three ladies often regarded her affectionately. Aunt Paula seemed the one preferred, for the child addressed her questions and wishes less to the grandmother and mother than to Paula.

Frau Gunther had not altered at all since her change of residence, she was as stately and refined as ever, and it still seemed, as her friends in the capital used to remark, as if every gown that she wore had only that day come from her milliner's.

The widow of the professor had become somewhat stouter. Paula had grown taller, and was a youthful but exact likeness of her mother.

"May I now call grandpapa?" asked the little Cornelia, when the second breakfast was placed on the round table in the middle of the room.

"Not yet, but presently," replied Paula.

Gunther was in his study, which was simply furnished, with his choice but not large library, and beautiful bronze casts suitably distributed. Gunther sat at this study table, as carefully dressed as if he were to appear at court the next minute. He rose, summer and winter invariably, at five o'clock every morning, and

had completed a day of work, when the day was only beginning for others. It was only in unavoidable and exceptional cases, that he might be disturbed in the morning.

He wrote much. In the capital they asserted that he was writing the memoirs of his life, and he had indeed much to tell; for who, like him, knew the internal history of the last and the present government? But he thought himself bound to write on a very different subject. From natural philosophy, linked with a practical knowledge of the world, he endeavoured to build up the science of life. Often a slight flush overspread his face, and his eye looked involuntarily out into the distance, as some mystery cleared before him; often too he rose, as if impelled by some secret feeling of power, and his breast would heave as he saw that free from all considerations, he was laying bare the innermost workings of customs and characters, like some physiological preparation.

From Gunther's windows, which consisted of large undivided panes, the view extended over the distant mountains. Far above on the heights there was a small opening, scarcely visible to the naked eye, the forest had here been a little cut down; and nothing was seen of the freehold farm and its vast extent of land, it was only known that there it was; and up there Irma had sat and worked and thought for now nearly four years, and here below sat Gunther at his oak table writing his work on "the science of life." His eye often wandered towards the mountains, but he little dreamed that up there a mind was pining away over the great enigma of existence, whilst he was here

in a peaceful mood putting together the events of his life.

When weighing culture and nature, mingled together, and their difficult equalisation in the relations of life and in characters, a hundred varied apparitions would present themselves before him; the living and the dead were alike, they concerned him only in their exemplification of the eternal idea. Often too, Eberhard's form rose before him as out of the morning fragrance of his youth, and again in its last deeply pitiful aspect; Irma also was conjured forth by the discerning spirit, and, without being named, was called into account for the present disturbed state of his mind.

Gunther had to-day thought of her especially.

There was a gentle knock at Gunther's door. His little grandchild entered, and Gunther's countenance brightened wonderfully at the sight of her. He had passed so many hours, absorbed in general thought, with his mind dwelling on images of remembrance and universal laws, that the fresh, cheerful, child-life, was now especially welcome to him. He went with his grandchild, and joined his wife and daughters.

They sat down to breakfast. Letters and papers were not opened till after the meal was finished.

"Did Adolph set out punctually?" asked Gunther.

He received an explicit answer. Gunther's son, who had the chemical manufactory in the capital, had been on a visit of some days with his parents; he had left them this morning, but Gunther had taken leave of him the evening before. It was a peculiarity, but one well digested, that he never took part in the disquiet of farewell at the last moment; they had many visitors, for the house was a hospitable one in the true

sense of the word, but Gunther always bid adieu to his guests the evening before, he never allowed his morning composure to be disturbed.

They were merry at breakfast, and Paula said that the spring had certainly come, for the wood carver in the neighbourhood had thrown his old felt-shoes out of the window, and that this was the surest token of spring, much more sure than the arrival of the swallows.

After breakfast, Gunther took his letters; he opened none of them hastily, but looked at the well known addresses of some, and at the post-mark of others; and leisurely selected those which he chose to read first.

This morning he opened first a letter bearing the seal of the minister of state. It was from Bronnen, who, since he had been invested with the highest office of the state, had kept up an unbroken correspondence with his old friend; he had also twice been a visitor at Gunther's house.

The expression of Gunther's face brightened as he read, and when he had finished and had quietly placed the letter aside, he said:

"Our friend Bronnen will pay us a visit again in the course of a few days."

Paula turned round quickly, bent down and kissed her little niece. Gunther saw the movement over the letter he was reading. After having looked through the rest of his correspondence, he took up his newspapers. He looked serious; now and then he pointed out a passage to Paula, for her to read aloud to him.

"One so often wishes," he said, "I mean I have

heard many express the wish, to be able after death to look down once more upon the world; it is however only a phrase which is considered deep because it is rarely weighed sufficiently. We possess, see, and understand, nothing but the world in which we live."

This remark came out curiously, and Paula was on the point of following it up with a question, but her mother signed to her to forbear. The thought had evidently dropped from a chain of inferences which occupied the mind of the solitary philosopher.

"You must answer several letters for me," said Gunther to Paula who acted as his secretary, "come!"

But just as Gunther was going, a courier brought a letter. It was from the queen. Gunther broke the seal, and read as follows:

** 5th April.

"Your letter breathes of the mountains air. If it did not perhaps interfere with your scientific studies, I should like to ask you to give me your collected philosophical considerations in an epistolary form. What cannot be given in the form of a letter, is scarcely to be conveyed at all. In the epistolary form we get the personal presence of the writer. And believe me I have a right to say this, for you cannot yourself estimate how you detract from the force of your ideas, when you set them forth in such a manner that another might have said the same. Letters have the voice of the writer. While I am writing I remember that your friend Horace wrote letters in verses, and the apostles also made use of the epistolary form.

"It made an uncomfortable impression upon me, when you said, that the thousand different forms of life which had once passed before your eye, thronged around your vessel, as around Charon's bark. I cannot imagine that you are leading us only into realms of shade; your task surely is the knowledge of life. I have of course misunderstood you. I conceive that you are personifying whole groups and epochs, and watching with your skilful touch the even pulsation of their existence.

"It is delightful that you can give my modest doings a place in the grand course of human development. I see well that this care for beneficent institutions is only a part and not a whole, but I carry them out with all my heart. This I owe to you. We know how small and imperfect are our doings; but we must yearn for the great and the complete, and nurture the germs of it with faithful devotion in small and separate efforts. And I find in working for others, something especially freeing to the mind, leading us as it does out of self-consideration. In self-consideration, and personal reflection, we hold ourselves sometimes too high, sometimes too low, we are beyond measure satisfied, or equally unsatisfied. It is only what we are able to accomplish, that gives us a measure of, our true value. I often ask myself whether I should have arrived at all this, had I been in the full possession of happiness. My feelings leant really in another direction. I had a desire, perhaps even a gift, for cultivating the beautiful, and for adorning life with festivals. Fate has decreed otherwise for me, and it is well. We ought not to turn life into a festivity, so long as there is so much misery to alleviate. — I was

so happy to bear the one crown. — I must also wear the other with willingness.

“Your remark that the lists of the members of beneficent institutions are the true and only church record of modern times, at first delighted me much, but then I was constrained to consider that you men of free thought are also terrorists. One must leave the church her rights, so long as she does not assume them alone, but also desires modestly to stand as equal with equal, with other institutions for instruction and charity.

“Through my patronage of the different charitable institutions, I have come into contact with many of the middle class, and find unusually much genuine culture, and good deportment. It has, as you may imagine cost me much effort to add some citizen names, more than merely for show. The Prime Minister Bronnen has in this also afforded me active assistance. I have too, in my committee for the blind asylum, an amiable Jewess, firm, and yet modest in character. It is Frau —; I think you once told me of her.

“In the last examination of the blind, the clergyman rather annoyed me, in his address to the blind, by extolling their fate as a wise dispensation of providence. I could only, by disregard of his presence, show my displeasure at this pathetic barbarity.

“I am now reading much religious history. When I review past ages, it seems to me as if I were sitting by the water-fall, which we have so often contemplated together. The everlasting stream rushes down, fresh water ever comes in view, forming always the same gushings, bubblings, and undulations, while the channel remains undisturbed, the rocky masses stand as they did on the day of creation, though grasses and flowers

grow in their fissures, and centuries hollow out here and there new courses, or a great natural event breaks open a fresh channel. Such is the history of the world. We are drops flowing down the stream, which foams and bounds along.

"I see that I have one thing more to answer in your letter. You wish me to tell you my observations on charitable institutions. Here however I feel the advantage and disadvantage of my position as queen. I am not certain whether my visit here and there is not announced beforehand, and I find things prepared. The blessing of my position is, however, that by my very presence, by a word, I can make the poor and miserable, happy. Yes, it is the first duty of one so highly privileged to show kindness to the destitute. Still one thought ever disturbs me: this participation in education and care is good and necessary, and perhaps expedient, but it deprives poor children of the best thing which a young mind should cherish, namely, being alone.

"You think that I have grown cheerful, and wish that this may be no passing mood. I myself believe that the key of my inner life has changed from minor to major, but the great discord of my existence remains the same. Do not think that I wilfully indulge it. I may say, that deep within my nature lies that grand sentence "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." I understand it thus: if thou findest aught in thine inclinations and strivings, which might become an offence to thyself or to the world, be unmerciful towards thyself and regard it not as an essential element of thy being, pluck it out.

"But, my friend, I cannot find the offence. I must

bear the great sorrow of my life. How often I long, for deliverance; he too suffers, and doubly so, being guilty, this often occurs to me, and just now while I write, a shudder passes over me, — a shadow of death stands between us. What can banish it?

* * 6th April.

"I have never yet thanked you for the best of all. That you express your full delight at the free constitution of the state, is an indescribable consolation. I read much that is good about the new government, but I read and heard just as much good about the last, and they wish even to assert that no breach with the old has taken place, that it is only another key but the same melody.

"Why is it that human beings are so proud, always wishing to assert themselves as unchangeable?

"Well, never mind! If only the good and the right are brought about.

"The dissolution of the guard is looked upon in our immediate circle, as a true revolution. It has only just become evident to me what a privileged caste there was, maintaining itself so independently, and we knowing nothing of it.

"Do you still remember how I once asked whether there were really any happy people on earth? Your life is now an answer to me, and your best happiness consists in the fact that you have no false part to perform, nothing which is opposed to your judgment and conviction.

"I now too see my error, in regarding your mode of thought, as the philosophy of solitude. You hold firm to the harmony of life. But I have still ever a fear of the evaporation of reality, when the living

forms of the vast human multitude will disappear, and only the spirit will remain, or, if I rightly understand, will be abolished in substance, and all share in actual life, with its personal influences, will cease.

"I cannot help it, I must give my affections to individual inmates of these establishments. I can promote the interests of the whole, but I can only love individually.

It has been a great comfort to me to find from you that there was never a period of history quite satisfied with itself. We dream so gladly of a golden age, but the golden age is to-day or never.

"But enough of remote matters. I gladly accede to your wish, and tell you of my little Woldemar; I must only take care not to weary you with a thousand small traits of him. According to your advice, I endeavour to encourage his inquiries, instead of teaching him what he does not himself seek to know. He has much that is decided in his nature, both in his inclinations and aversions. I think that is well, and I give it full play. He has predominantly the king's disposition. At the same time his feeling for music is especially apparent. I think it was good for him that in the literal sense of the word, he was sung to in his cradle, though by the lips of those hypocrite specimens of culture and nature. Ah! dear friend, this sad remembrance ever casts a dark shadow over all thoughts and imaginings.

* * 7th April.

"This weary writing is coming to an end. We are going to see you, dear friend, Woldemar and I, I and Woldemar.

"I have just told Woldemar so, and he at once added in a decided tone:

“‘But Schnipp and Schnapp, (those are his two ponies) must go too.’

“Briefly then: the king has granted my request, and I may go to you with Woldemar for four weeks at midsummer for the benefit of my health. Order has been already given — the Minister Bronnen has, I believe, already privately arranged it, that the dairy farm in your neighbourhood which is said to be very beautifully situated, is to be prepared for a small retinuc.

“On Göthe’s birthday we shall walk together this year.

“Now, however, my letter is long enough, and I will begin no fresh sheet. If, as I might suppose, you have any power over your native mountains, let them be thoroughly bright and cloudless to welcome

Your friend

MATILDA.

“Postscript.

“Bronnen has I hear been with you. He has told me much of his visit, and when I asked after your youngest daughter, I fancied I observed a particular emotion in his manner. Was I mistaken? Remember me to your wife and your children. I hope the presence of the queen will not embarrass them.”

THIRD CHAPTER.

It seems in the quietest life, as if there were days, in which the whole world had, as it were, agreed, that one disturbing visit after another should besiege the doors.

Gunther had scarcely time to compose himself in

his room after reading the queen's letter. It was evident that the king was aiming at bringing about a reconciliation between himself and his consort by means of her dismissed friend. Gunther was ready to cooperate, but in no wise to allow the even tenor of his life to be again altered. The allusion of the queen with regard to Bronnen accorded with his own observations, and even now he heard Paula singing loudly and clearly — for the first time this year at the open window — and in her voice there lay an expression of satisfied joy. He knew that Paula was worthy of a happy life, and he could wish his distinguished friend and his own child nothing better than their union; but even should this occur, his resolve stood firm never again to leave his native place.

Gunther sat alone, in a calm reverie.

The servant announced the freehold peasant's wife.

"No — Walpurga!" cried a voice without, and before the servant could bring the answer, Walpurga had entered the room.

"Ah! Doctor Gunther, so you are our neighbour? I only heard it a minute ago that you were living here, and it is scarcely four hours' walk from our farm. Yes — so it is hereabouts, one lives in solitudes, just as separate from each other as if we were dead."

She stretched out her hand to Gunther, but he was gathering several papers together, and he asked:

"Is your mother still alive?"

"Alas! Sir, no. Ah! had she but lived to see the good physician again, and who knows whether she would not be still alive, if she had been able to call you in her illness."

Walpurga wept at the remembrance of her mother. Gunther sat down and asked:

"What is your object here?"

"How? what?" asked Walpurga quickly drying her tears. "And you don't ask me at all how it fares with me?"

"You are in prosperity, and are yourself little altered."

"Allow me to sit down," said Walpurga in a distressed tone.

This cold reception from the man who had formerly been so benevolent and kind, touched her so deeply that she could hardly stand upright. She looked round the room as if confused. At length she said:

"And haven't you anything further to ask me? Not even where I now live? And how it fares with my husband and my children?"

"Walpurga," said the physician rising, "leave off now your old comedy acting."

"What — comedy acting? I don't know what that is, and what I have to do with comedy acting?"

"That does not concern us now. Have you anything to ask me, or anything to communicate to me?"

"To be sure, — that's just why I am come."

"Then say it."

"Yes. — But everything has got confused in my head because you are like this. My Hansei knows nothing of it that I am come to you, and no one else in the world is to know anything of it, but you, and you alone. I can keep a secret, I have kept one. I can be trusted, a secret is safe with me."

"I know that," said the physician, in a hard tone.

"You know that? Whence? You cannot know it,

and I am not going to tell it you now fully. I should perhaps have told it you, but after such a reception, I can't."

"Do entirely as you think best — speak or be silent, only be brief, for I have but little time."

"Then I would rather come another time."

"I cannot receive you for mere chatter — speak now what you may have to say."

"Well then, doctor Oh! good God, that you don't even give me a hand, I can't make it out, but I see so it is with the great people; let it be so — I know, thank God, where I am at home."

"Leave your empty words," interrupted Gunther still more sharply. "What have you to communicate to me? Can I help you in any way?"

"Me? thank God, I lack nothing. I only wanted to say that out yonder in the dairy farm, there lives the under forester, Steingassinger, and his wife is my friend and companion Stasi, and she told me at the very beginning of the winter that the king would come here this summer, and so I only wanted to say that the king can come quite freely to our farm, if he will pay me a visit. I might have had something else to say, but I see it's better for me to say nothing, I shouldn't like to forfeit my word."

Gunther nodded.

"If the king wishes to pay you a visit," said he, "I will communicate to him what you say."

"And isn't our good dear queen coming with him? I have often woke out of my sleep in the night with vexation and sorrow that she has never troubled herself at all about me, and she promised it too so solemnly. I don't understand how it's possible that she doesn't

think any more at all about me. But it is well as it is. And how does it fare with my prince? And is it true that you are out of favour and are no longer in the palace, and that that is why you are living here in this little house?"

The physician gave an evasive answer, saying at the same time that he had other things to do.

Walpurga stood up, but she could not move from the spot, she did not understand what it was, and only because she had previously planned it in her mind, she added that the physician should visit her some day when occasion offered, and whether she mightn't speak for a minute with the good Frau Gunther. She hoped at least to meet with a friendly reception from her, and an explanation of the repelling manner of the physician.

"Go to her," replied Gunther; he turned away, took a book, and Walpurga left the room.

She stood at the entrance, and was obliged to consider whether she were not in a dream. She, the former nurse of the crownprince, was now looked at as if they had never known her, and she, the freehold peasant's wife — her pride rose as she thought of her large homestead — she was now sent away like a beggar woman.

She had no longer any wish to speak to Frau Gunther, and a feeling of deep sorrow made her lips tremble as she involuntarily thought how base the great people were. And then this house was so praised, and she had herself praised it once, as if it were the abode of perfection.

She quitted the house, but in the garden she met

Frau Gunther, who started back when she recognised Walpurga.

"Don't you know me any longer?" said Walpurga, stretching out her hand to her.

"Certainly, I recognise you still," said Frau Gunther, not taking the offered hand. "Where do you come from?"

"From my farm. My husband is now a freehold peasant, and, madam, if you were to come and see me, I shouldn't let you stand outside like this. I should say to you: 'Come inside into my room.'"

"But I do not say so," replied Frau Gunther. "I put nothing in the way of people who don't keep the straight road, but I don't invite them into my house."

"And when have I not kept the straight road? What have I done?"

"I am not your judge."

"Every one may be my judge. What have I done? You must tell me."

"I must not, but I will. You will have to answer it to yourself, how that quantity of money was gained with which you have purchased your large farm. Adieu!" She went towards the house.

Walpurga stood alone. The houses, the mountains, the forests, the fields swam before her, and bitter tears were in her eyes.

Gunther had seen from his window, Walpurga's interview with his wife in the garden, and by her repelling manner he had remarked that she must have spoken the truth to the peasant woman. He now saw Walpurga walking away, and often standing still and drying her tears with her apron. At any rate, thought he to himself, this woman from the people feels honest

repentance, and this is but a new exhibition of that chain of evil in which corruption corrupts others.

It was only with difficulty that Gunther had allowed himself to be convinced that Walpurga had received a large sum of money for base services, but it had been judicially established that the farm had been paid for in cash, and that this cash was in newly-coined gold, such as only passes through royal hands. And just because Gunther had believed in Walpurga's simple true-heartedness, and had staked his word upon it, he was all the more bitter against her.

He was resolved to take a speedy opportunity for clearing up the matter.

FOURTH CHAPTER.

JOYFULLY and proudly as Walpurga had set out in the morning from the farm, in equal sadness and humility did she return home in the evening.

She might well have been proud, for no rich peasant's wife presented a better appearance. Franz, the former cuirassier, had well broken in the grey foal, it was harnessed to the little Swiss carriage, and the pretty animal looked round as if satisfied when the peasant woman came out, dressed in her Sunday clothes, with her little daughter Burgei, and Hansci helped his wife into the vehicle, and then gave her the child.

"Come home again safe and sound," said he; "and you, Franz, take care of the nag!"

"No fear," answered Franz; and the little grey

horse started off friskily, thinking nothing of the draught.

Hansei looked after his wife and child for a time, then he turned round and went to his work; he only nodded to Irma, who was looking out of her window, waving her farewell to Walpurga.

Walpurga drove away, holding her hand to her heart, as if to repress the overflowing happiness.

What could there be better on earth than to leave behind such a well-appointed homestead, and at the same time people could see how comfortably conditioned they were. But Walpurga was proud of something else which people could not see.

With great precaution she had arranged a difficult matter — that on the following morning Irma should go to the pasture-hut, and all danger would be averted. It was no small matter to keep such a secret throughout a whole winter, for Irma's plan harmonised with her own. Walpurga held her firm to the idea, that she would pass a whole summer in still deeper solitude. She had learned from her friend Stasi, whose husband had heard it from the head forester, that the king would be coming during the following summer into the neighbourhood of the little town. She feared for Irma. And now the matter had become still more decided. Stasi's husband had been removed to the dairy-farm; he had to clear the forest-drives, and to superintend the arrangement of paths and approaches, preparatory to the arrival of the king.

There were still many household implements and conveniences for Gundel's and Irma's use in the pasture-hut, and Hansei consented that his wife, instead of buying the things in the neighbouring town, should

go to one more distant, and at the same time fulfil a promise of visiting her friend in her new abode; at last, he had even permitted that she should take the little Burgei with her; and thus Walpurga now drove away with a satisfied heart, greeting her acquaintances in the neighbouring village, and smiling kindly to all whom she saw on the road.

"I should like," said Franz, as they went along, "that we could drive just so altogether about our old village on the lake; we are all of us from the same place, I, and the master's wife, and Burgei, and the grey horse."

Franz had dressed himself out to-day especially, and his whole face shone, for he too cherished a secret thought; he intended in the little town to buy a silver ring, to place on his Gundel's finger, before she went to the pasture-hut.

"Only have a care of the grey horse," replied Walpurga; "it is still very young. And what a beautiful day it is! but the cherries are not yet in blossom down here, and the little sapling which we brought from home is blossoming for the first time this year. Haven't you seen it?"

"No."

They drove quietly on.

When they came towards the little town where Stasi lived, Franz, who was a good deal about the country with the farm-teams, said:

"Mistress, the beautiful stream there, comes from up yonder, by our new pasturage, scarcely a gun-shot from it, it comes out of the rock."

Walpurga smiled. Actually on her own land, there was the source of a stream which flowed far through

the country. Yes; one would hardly believe how one could arrive at having everything in the world.

Stasi's delight at Walpurga's arrival was very great, and a better bestower of praise Walpurga could not have desired. She declared that the king had no finer horse, no more mannerly servant, no more charming child, and no better wife, than Hansei had; and everywhere where she took Walpurga, the workmen who were arranging paths and building bridges paused for a time at their work, and looked at the stately peasant woman and the child, who was the miniature of her mother both in dress and features.

Stasi prepared an excellent meal, and Walpurga had brought with her a store of eggs, butter, and other domestic comforts. Walpurga was honoured in the official dwelling of the new inspector, as if she were the queen.

At length the purchases were to be made in the town, and Walpurga showed herself both sensible and conscious of her position. She always bought the best of everything offered to her, and did not bargain much about the price.

When they returned to the dairy-farm, Walpurga was on the point of imparting somewhat of her secret to her friend, in order to keep it more secure from the king, when she heard what a distinguished man had been living now for nearly four years in the little town.

"Oh, good heavens, that is actually one of my best friends," she exclaimed. She quickly gave the child to Stasi, and hastened to Gunther's house. She thought her heart would have burst with joy; and she was obliged

to sit down in front of the house for a time to get her breath.

But when she took the way back again to the farm, she kept looking down on the ground; she could not raise her eyes; and, worst of all, she had exclaimed to Stasi: "He is one of my best friends!"

She was now expected to tell of her visit. She could not bring out a word; she only said:

"Ask me nothing as to what sort of folk great people are. If I begin to speak, I shall not have finished before to-morrow; and we must be going away, or else we shan't be home till night."

The more that Stasi and her husband now praised the physician and his wife and daughters, the quieter and sadder grew Walpurga. She could not say what they had done to her. "This is all one has," she thought, "when one relies on the honour which others are to give one."

When they were gone away, Stasi and the inspector talked together of how strange and changeable Walpurga was; but Walpurga was glad that she had no longer to meet the eye of another. "And so it is thus!" she thought. "Now something is to arise which one had never dreamed of. Oh, dear mother," she said aloud to herself, "you were right; everything in the world has to be paid for. Now that bright gold has to be paid for — but how?"

She placed her child, who was sitting by her side, upon her lap, as though it were the only thing remaining to her; she embraced and kissed it, and it fell asleep upon her heart. She too grew calmer, although she had a lively sense of the wrong inflicted on her, and who knows what more might be in store for her?

Long ago, when she had experienced the invidious conduct of the villagers in her old home, she could console herself with the fact that they were but simple undiscerning people. But now? What could she now say to herself by way of comfort? And was she now again to feel her mind disturbed for ever so long? And there was no one to whom she could make it known. Her mother was no longer there, and Hansei was not to know of anything, and Irmgard, beyond all, must be kept in ignorance of it.

It was growing into twilight when she at length caught sight of her home. She tried to compose herself.

"It is better," she said; "I will let the suspicion rest upon me till I die, or till she dies; for no one comes to us, and I need not trouble about my good Irma, who has much harder to bear; and, thank God, I have betrayed nothing of the secret, and it's doubly good that she is now going up there into the wilds, where no one'll find her."

She entered her house with a feeling of strength, and she told Hansei only of her visit to Stasi.

"I have hitherto borne it all alone," said she to herself; "and I will continue to bear it."

With great self-command she exhibited an air of cheerfulness before Hansei and Irma, and played with her boy, for whom she had brought back a little wooden horse.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

It was an evening full of unrest; Hansei had much to do, and again and again he found something to arrange in the cowbells, for he liked to listen to their sound, and he had purchased a good-toned set of bells, and Irma had praised them highly this very day when Hansei had shown them to her, and had made them ring.

They went early to bed, for they had to rise on the next morning long before day.

Hansei was asleep. Presently he awoke again, and heard Walpurga crying and sobbing.

"For God's sake, what is it?"

"Oh! if only my mother were still alive!" said Walpurga sorrowfully. "If I only still had my mother!"

"Don't say that. And don't keep weeping now any more. It's a sin."

"What! it's a sin to mourn for my mother?"

"That depends on how one mourns. I have often heard say that so long as the grass isn't grown over the grave, one may weep for one's dead — that don't harm the dead nor the living either; but when the grass is grown over the grave, one oughtn't to think of the dead with weeping. You know the saying: 'It makes their clothes wet in the other world.' Don't fall into sin, Walpurga; your mother has lived out her time, and this is how it is in the world; parents must die before their children, and I only hope that our children won't forget us, but that when the time is over, they mayn't think of us any longer with weeping. But now — why

d'ye let me talk so much? Am I right or not? Why are you so silent?"

"Yes, yes, you are right; but I beg you don't ask me anything more now — I have just now all sorts of thoughts in my mind. Good-night!"

"Good night! And say good night also to your unnecessary thoughts."

A fleeting smile passed over Walpurga's face, as Hansei made this wise appeal to her; then again melancholy, despair, and a painful sense of disappointment overwhelmed her. She had wept for her mother, who had borne with her Irma's secret, and with whom she could have spoken of it. Now a new burden oppressed her mind, threatening almost to crush it, and nobody in the world to help her.

That evening, when she had stood in the palace-yard and had felt as if she had been conveyed into the enchanted mountain, passed suddenly before her, and the stone figures in the dusky light stared at her. She had taken away with her a golden treasure, but what had clung to it? The injury she had experienced gnawed at her heart: "Such are great people," she exclaimed, "they condemn without a hearing."

"It doesn't seem right to you, perhaps, that our Irmgard should go to the pasture-hut," inquired Hansei after some time.

"I thought you had been long asleep," replied Walpurga, "Good night again."

She thought how it would be if Hansei learned what they said of her. How would he bear it? and was it not a wonder that hitherto nothing had been heard of it?

All her honour in the eyes of others, was suddenly

turned into shame, her peculiar gift of imagining what people here and there were saying, and thinking, became a torment, and everything seemed confused to her, as if she were waking from a dream.

She got up and felt for her clothes, she wanted to go to Irma, to pour out her sorrow and thus to lighten her heart. But she quickly struggled against the impulse. How could she impose this on the penitent? She had the strength to pass for dead in the world, and to renounce everything; how little, how absolutely nothing, compared to it, was this which she had to suffer And had not even the queen to suffer innocently? Was it not the lot of one being to suffer for another? . . .

A power which she had never known till now, suddenly filled her. She would suffer for Irma, she would sacrifice her garb of honour to afford protection to the penitent.

She was almost thankful that the physician had treated her severely; how would it have been if a friendly reception had induced her to betray anything?

The elements mingled in Walpurga's character, were alternately in fermentation and repose: the quiet life at home, the unquiet one at court, the vanity, the honour, the humility, the pride, the joy of possession, the desire of being considered some one, all this moved as it were pell-mell within her, till at last the true aspect of things revealed itself to her.

"What hast thou after all done for Irma?" said she to herself, "nothing at all! thou hast let her live near thee." She was now ready to submit to disgrace for her sake.

It is not the esteem in which one is held in the

world, but what one is worth in oneself, that is the main thing.

This thought arose in her half dreamy mind, and she breathed freely.

When she at length laid her head back calmly on the pillow, it seemed to her as if her mother's hand were stroking her brow.

SIXTH CHAPTER.

It was a mild spring night. —

Irma was sitting by the spring looking out on the glittering, starry heaven. It seemed to her so strange that she was now again to wander forth. Early in the morning she was going to the pasture-hut, to spend a whole summer there. How would it be with her when she again sat here, listening to the stream rushing past in the night?

Presently she heard a whispering through the dark open stable door.

"Yes, Gundel, the mistress has also April weather in her head; on the drive there she was so merry, and on the drive home it was just as if she had been beaten. She was with the great Doctor, and something must have happened to her there. But what does the mistress matter to us now? She bought pots and pans, and I something better. Give me your hand here. There, this little silver ring I put on your finger, and by it I harness your body and soul in faith to me, and you are mine. Now you may dance out into the world, and skip up all the mountains, — still I have you."

A hearty kiss was then heard, and Gundel said at last:

"But you'll come now and then, won't you, up to the pasture-hut?"

"Yes, certainly." And then there followed again some unintelligible whispering. —

"Hark, look," said Franz suddenly "there sits Cousin Irmgard, and she has heard it all."

"That's of no matter, she knows it all, and that is pleasant, as I can talk with her all the summer. Come, let's go to her, you'll see how good she is."

They went to Irma.

She gave her hand to them both, and said:

"Let your love be like this spring, pure and fresh and inexhaustible."

She dipped her hand into the gushing spring which glittered in the moon light, and sprinkled the two lovers with the water.

"That's as good as if it came out of a holy water-pot," cried Franz, "now everything will be good and right; I have no more fear. Thou spring, and thou elder tree, ye are our witnesses that we are pledged to each other, and can never break our vow. Good night!"

Franz went back to the stable and closed the door. Gundel went with Irma to her room, and slept on the bench, for her father, the little pitch-man, had already gone beforehand, with her bed and various other articles of household furniture to the pasture hut.

It was long before Irma slept. It seemed to her as if she must live in anticipation the many days and nights she would spend up there. She was restless.

She lay turning all over in her mind till her thoughts became confused.

At last she asked, in a soft voice:

"Gundel, are not you asleep yet?"

"Oh no. And I know my Franz is not asleep either. He's not so well off as I am, he has got no one to speak to, as I have, with you. Oh! how I thank you for it. You shall have it right comfortable. Oh! what a good true soul Franz is! Do you hear the cows lowing in the stall? They have no rest either. I think I already hear the bells which they are to have round their necks to-morrow, and I feel as if the cows must also know it beforehand. Oh! if you only had too a sweetheart, Irmgard. But I know already, how it will be with you, as it says in the story — you're worthy of it. There was once a king who rode through the forest, and he found a beautiful girl tending cattle, and he put her on his horse and took her home with him, and gave her clothes of gold, and a diamond crown on her head and then the queen — Oh! the bells, the queen — come White-spot, the bells.... come, come, come, and then —"

Gundel fell asleep. But Irma still lay awake, and looked out into the moon light, and the whole world was like a marvel to her, and vague fairy tales rose before her. She smiled, and her eyes sparkled, till sleep closed them; but the smile remained on her countenance when there was none to see it, save the moon which stood calmly in the sky.

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

PROJECTS which have been decided on with clearness and cheerful certainty, are often realized in sadness and despondency. So was it now, when they prepared for their expedition to the pasture hut.

It was early dawn. Irma stood before the open hearth with Walpurga. She shivered with cold.

Since her return from her short visit to the wide world, Irma had overcome all feeling of longing, but still a new sense of homelessness had come over her, as if she were only to-day entering upon her present circumstances; she often looked round, as if she saw a figure approaching with a light bundle under her arm, and this figure was herself, and yet so changed; she scarcely felt any longer the necessity for food and drink, and scarcely an impulse to speak; she lived entirely in herself, and from herself alone. At the same time, though silent, she was cheerful and confiding when addressed.

The little pitch-man was the first to perceive this change, and he it was who considered the fresh summer air on the pastureland, especially advantageous to Irma, for he maintained that she was ill, though she always seemed well and worked unremittingly.

Everything had now turned out as though by agreement: Irma's own wish, the uncle's persuasion, and the danger of discovery by the coming of the king to the neighbourhood, and this Walpurga in secret was anxious to avert.

Walpurga, on this morning was cheerful and free,

as if after some victory obtained by a hard struggle; her eye often rested upon Irma, who stood looking fixedly at the open hearth.

"You'll see," she said at length to her, "you'll be quite a different being up there, and I can fancy already, I hear you sing again, and then we'll sing again together."

She hummed to herself the air:

"We two are so united,
So happily allied."

But Irma did not join her.

"I shall endure life, so long as life endures me," said Irma to herself, holding her hands open before the fire.

It was not long that the two women could thus stand so quietly before the hearth. In the stable outside, everything was in readiness. The little pitch-man, as one acquainted with all such mysteries, had arranged everything on the day previously, in order to make the herd sound and strong for their future abode. He had brought down from the pasture-land a clod of earth and three ants' nests, and this earth was mixed up with bear's wort, devil's bit, salt, and other things, into which a little pitch-oil was dropped, and this was given to all the animals as their last supply of provender. The little pitch-man had come down from the pasturage in the night, and had, unasked, prepared the mysterious morsels, proud of doing anything for the peasant, who was not yet quite at home in the country. The animals had now finished their meal, and were prepared against all enchantments and all sickness, and would be as much at home on the

pasturage, as if they had been born there. When the day now began to dawn, even the cows seemed as if they could no longer be restrained; each one, as she came out of the stall, was sprinkled by Peter with the water made sacred by the badge of the three kings, but in spite of all nostrums and holy water the tame domestic creatures seemed to have grown into wild animals; there was a lowing, and a running, and a bolting in the farm enclosure, and amidst it all was heard the shouts of the herdsmen. At the order of the little pitch-man, they let the cows have their own way, and at last they became quiet of themselves. Gundel placed the wreath on the horns of the beautiful large brown cow, and hung round her neck the great leader's bell; the other cows also received theirs, and then the leading cow was surrounded in a circle by her companions, who glared at her, snorting. But she stood so proud and scornful, that none ventured any more to challenge her.

"Now, let us be off!" cried the little pitch-man, opening the farm gate. The procession began to move. Last of all came Franz, who held by its short strong horns the powerful red bull, and was rather dragged by it than that it was led by him. As soon as the bull was out of the stall, he stood still, and looked right and left with his fearful rolling eyes, tossed up his head, and stepped alone and full of dignity; but outside the gate he roared loudly.

All had been quietly and well prepared, and yet there was hurry at the end. Walpurga and Hansei accompanied the little procession for a part of the way.

Irma was silent. She walked forward firmly, and

yet it seemed to her as if her will had little to do with this, but that she was impelled onward by another.

"You look already more cheerful again," said Hansei to Irma. She nodded.

The herd which had gone in advance, halted at the entrance to the village, for without the cattle-keeper they might not go through it.

They could well have taken another route, which led up to the mountain at the back of the village, and this was a good deal nearer, but why should they not for once exhibit themselves and their cattle to people, before they went into solitude? So they now passed through the village with their beautiful bells, and from many a quarter there resounded joyous acclamations and hurras.

On the other side of the village, they ascended the mountain, and came to the road in the forest which Hansei had cut; and he could not refrain from repeatedly pointing out to Irma what he had accomplished.

At the spot, where, in the middle of the forest, the royal arms were carved on the boundary stone — for here the royal forest began — Hansei took farewell of Irma; Walpurga did so also, but she still accompanied her a little way further alone; she had so much to say to Irma, and yet she only said to her: "Be without a fear, next Sunday I'll come to you. But if you feel too lonely, only come down to us again; stay however up yonder, you'll see it will do you good."

Walpurga's heart felt oppressed with the burden of the secret. She quickly bid her farewell.

Hansei was sitting on the boundary stone wait-

ing for his wife; when she now came down, he walked homewards with her for some time in silence.

"I am often obliged to think whether it isn't a dream," said he at last. "Now in this autumn it will be four years that we have been here, and that she has been with us. I love her so dearly I can't tell you, and yet I don't know her — that is I know her, in a sense, well, but yet again, I don't know her."

"Stop a bit, Hansei," said Walpurga.

He stood still. In the distance they heard the bells of the cattle going up the mountain; in the wood all was silent; for a thick mist had veiled the mountains, and the birds were mute. Walpurga drew a deep breath.

"Hansei," she began at last, "you have stood the heavy test. I could never have believed, that any man could have done as you have done. Now let me tell you, I think I must at last open the door to you."

"Stop," interrupted Hansei, "not so! Has she herself told you, that you are now to make it all known to me? Say yes or no." —

"No."

"Then I will also know nothing. It is a possession entrusted to you, and one has no right to touch it. Truly, if I must speak honestly, it has often half turned my brain. Tell me only one thing: She hasn't, has she, done anything to any one, and she hasn't stolen? That is, she may have done what she will, but she has atoned for it. Tell me only this, nothing else, has she anything on her conscience?"

"God forbid! she has done no wrong to any one on earth, but to herself alone."

"That's well. Now let's talk of something else.

Did you see in the village how that deaf and dumb man fell on his knees before her?"

"No."

"But I saw it, and I heard too, how Babi the root girl said: the crazy woman from the farm would never come back again from the pasture-but. Now Babi is crazed and Irmgard isn't, but still it frightened me. I don't know — I think the farm would never feel like itself, if we hadn't Irmgard; she quite belongs to it."

When they both reached their home, Hansei said, as they sat in the room together:

"Don't you remember how she advised that we should place the table differently, and how she helped you to arrange everything, and how she then told uncle to shorten the legs of the chairs that they might better suit the table? I have never seen a peasant's room that looked so beautiful as it does with us, and it was she who helped you in it."

Hansei had various things to prepare and arrange about the house, but Walpurga often came to him with one of the children, and spoke a few short words; she did not like to be alone, she missed Irma, and yet she was happy to know that she was safely concealed up there in solitude.

EIGHTH CHAPTER.

THE day did not clear up. At noon the mist changed into pouring rain.

"I wonder if it rains up there too? she will be terribly wet," Walpurga kept thinking to herself, and

indeed it was raining just the same in the mountain forest; it drizzled fast, and rustled among the trees, and rapid little streams ran across the road, and gurgled and splashed down the mountain side.

Irma walked quietly on with the help of her mountain staff. — Hansei had given her his own. The little pitch-man had given her as a protection against the weather his grey woollen rug, in which only a hole had been made to slip the head through; he himself made a skilful covering with empty corn-sacks. So he stepped on by her side, often declaring that he would carry her.

Irma went on. The mountain-staff was hardly needed for ascending, but now and then they had to go down a sharp declivity — a sink, as the little pitch-man called it — then they were obliged to plant it firmly, and to swing themselves by it. The little pitch-man was always by the side of Irma, ready at any moment to catch her, if she missed her footing; but Irma had a firm step.

It was no little trouble to keep the herd together, as they were not yet accustomed to each other; but the little pitch-man knew how to allure, to scold, to flatter, and to chastise, and soon the set of bells went all together, like music ascending the hill.

"The animals have the best of it; they find their fodder everywhere by the wayside," said the little pitch-man: "but the mistress has given me something for ourselves; we shall soon be coming to the witches'-table, and down there we can sit in the dry, and get some food into the bargain."

A broad projecting rock, like a half-circular table, was soon visible; here, there was a dry sandy soil, where

only the lion-ant dwelt in his funnel-shaped hole. Gundel, Franz, the little pitch-man, and Irma sat down under the shelter of the witches'-table, and ate with an appetite, while the cows grazed outside, under the care of the herdsman's boy.

"The rain'll last long," said Franz.

The little pitch-man remonstrated, and said that no one knew how long the rain would last. He wanted to encourage Irma.

He caught a lion-ant out of its hole, and showed how clever the little creature was; how it makes a pitfall in the fine sand, hides itself at the point of its funnel, and when a common ant comes unsuspectingly along, it falls down and can't get out again, for the fine sand keeps rolling under its feet, and the rogue in his hiding-place blinds it with sand, catches it and eats it. "And the most wonderful of all," he added in conclusion, "is, that the grey maggot there will be next year a brown dragon-fly on the lake."

The little pitch-man knew Irma; he was aware that such an insight into the workings of nature would refresh her more than any commonplace encouragements or food.

They went on with renewed vigour higher and higher up the mountain. The animals grew more lively, the herbage of this higher region seemed to invigorate them. At length they were not far from the clearance in the forest where the new pasturage lay; the little pitch-man told Franz to go in advance, and open the stable-door above. Franz obeyed the direction immediately, and presently his call was heard, and the cows, just stepping on the open pasture-land, lowed and sprang forward. Mist and rain was

so thick, that the hut was only visible a few paces before they reached it.

"That is good," cried the little pitch-man; "that's the best thing; there are swallows already building on our cottage; it's now complete!"

He stepped forward, knocked three times at the hut-door, opened it, and extended his hand to Irma, with the words: "Happiness come, unhappiness depart!" And at length they were at home.

Oh! a protecting roof over one's head! Irma often looked up, and her expression of gratitude said how glad she felt to be protected from the storm. From within the hut they saw and heard the rain without, much more gloomily than when exposed to it they had been ascending the mountain. The cheerful fire soon burned on the large hearth, and the little pitch-man took something out of his pocket, and threw it into the flames, murmuring to himself:

"Since the world began," said he, "no fire has been lighted up here, and no smoke has yet risen to heaven, and now we are the first inhabitants. But the swallows — yes, the swallows — that is good . . ."

He would have probably had still more to say, but he was called away by Franz; for a cow had calved in the stable.

Irma was alone with Gundel; she undressed herself quickly, and dried and warmed herself at the fire; but Gundel was also called that she might be a partner in the joy which such events call forth in the peasant's life, and Irma sat alone in *deshabille* by the fire on the hearth; only a short time ago, a fear had come over her with the cold, now she looked calmly into the open fire, a solitary child of man alone on the heights. She

knew no longer where she was, till she heard voices approaching the tent. She quickly threw on again her dried clothes, and the little pitch-man brought in his congratulations that on the very first day they had been blessed with this splendid calf.

The night came on, and Franz took his departure. Gundel accompanied him a little way, and soon through the pouring rain there might be heard a shout from below and an answer from above, until she returned. They soon went to rest.

The little pitch-man and the cowboy slept on the hay above the stable; Irma and Gundel in the house.

When they awoke next morning, the day was still gloomy; a thick mist continued to veil everything.

"We have got into a cloud," said the little pitch-man.

The cows were grazing outside, the bells were scattered, and it sounded in the distance like the dreamy humming of bees.

Irma had hoped for still greater solitude, and now she was shut up in a narrow hut with a few people. The little pitch-man had said that they were the first inhabitants of this bit of earth, and it seemed as if nature were disinclined that men should venture to keep advancing further; the wind howled, it chased the clouds, but it brought up again fresh ones, and now and then they heard a roll and a report; it was the avalanches slipping down the snowy mountains.

Irma endeavoured to work, but she could not rightly succeed.

Night came again, and day dawned, and the same impenetrable cloud prevailed. Even the animals

seemed to complain at it, their lowing sounded so deeply sorrowful in the direction of the valley.

It was the third morning at dawn when Irma woke as if something had touched her; she got up. Through the crevice in the window-shutter, a glimmer of light penetrated.

"Is it the sun that has woke me?" she said to herself; and she put on her things quickly and noiselessly, and went outside the hut.

"She took in full draughts of the moist aromatic morning air. The brown cow, which was grazing not far from her, raised its head and looked at her, and then began to eat again.

By degrees a silver-grey light dawned in the east, and through Irma's mind there floated that wonderful air out of Haydn's "Creation;" she fancied she could grasp the tones in the glorious visions breaking on her view in the early morning-grey; the grey changing into gold, and then tinged by a flash of red, spreading ever higher and higher, while down below far into the distance, like a dark immeasurable flood, all still lay in gloom. Now however rugged heights, peaks, and broad mountain-ridges began to emerge; other summits were free, but their base lay still in the gloom, which was fast changing into dark grey. More glowing and more widely spreading became the rosy tint on the sky, and more and more boldly the giant forms of the mountains stood forth, and now — no eye can gaze on it — the great ball of the sun appeared, dyeing the heights in purple and gold, while far in the depths below there floated masses of rolling clouds like silent waves. The day had dawned — the bright day — warming and kindling the earth with its glow, and a

thousand glittering vapours rose from tree, and grass, and flower, and the song of the birds resounded, and Irma stood with her arms extended, as if she must embrace infinity; she knelt not down, she stood upright, and her foot rose as if she were going to soar away into infinite space, and with both her hands she clasped her bandaged forehead. The bandage unfastened, and fell to the ground.

The sun shone upon her brow, her brow was pure — she felt it. Long she stood there with gazing eye, and her eye was not dazzled by the sun, and a freeing sense of harmony passed through her mind. A child of man had witnessed the type of creation, and had been created anew.

"Now come," she exclaimed, "ye days which I have still to breathe, whether long or short, where or with whom — I am free, I am delivered. Whatever I have yet to do, it is only a work before my journey. The hour will come. Let it come — sooner or later — I am ready. I have lived."

"Hie! Irmgard! you look so strange like!" cried Gundel, who came out of the hut with her milkpail. "Good gracious! what a forehead you've got! So white! — oh! it is beautiful! How beautiful you are! I have never seen a forehead so smooth before!"

Irma accepted a glass of milk from Gundel, and then tucked up her gown and went into the wood. It was midday when she came back to the hut; her lips had to-day scarcely uttered a single word.

She found the little pitch-man standing by the table in the hut, arranging a great heap of strongly-smelling herbs and roots.

"See," he cried, "I've got something too already!

Yes, I'm not without my bit of knowledge. I have gathered mountain-parsley and trefoil for apothecaries; I know all the things they use from the land up here, and a hundred times has my sister said: 'Everything is sweet and good in the spring; it's only the summer that brings out the poison.' Oh! she was clever, and she's said a hundred times: 'The best things grow up yonder where the clouds rest.'"

After a time he began again:

"Gundel's right; I must say I didn't know you were so beautiful; but you don't look healthy somehow — you must eat more; you eat scarcely anything at all."

Irma looked at him with a grateful smile, but she did not answer a word.

"Do you know what I should have liked to have been?" he asked?

"What?"

"I should like to have been your father."

Irma nodded silently. Her father had been invoked, and it seemed to her as if his lips and his voice were speaking in the poor simple man, who now continued:

"I often feel as if you had — God forgive me — come down out of the sky, and had had no father and no mother, and to-day you look so that my eyes get misty when I see you. There now, eat a bit!"

He went on chattering, just as if he were half-intoxicated, but the burden of it all was always: "Now eat a bit."

For the sake of the good old man, Irma compelled herself to eat.

NINTH CHAPTER.

The days were bright, the nights full of starlit glory, the breath was free, the eye was clear, all sad thoughts seemed to have remained below among the fixed abodes of men.

"I think you could now sing again, your voice isn't so hoarse as it was," said the little pitch-man to Irma, "but you ought to sleep more, when one is old, sleep runs away of itself; you oughtn't to send it away when it would like to stay with you."

The little pitch-man seemed to double his care, and Irma now perceived that her voice was really hoarse. She rested too so gladly; she wandered indeed through the forests and valleys, where only the huntsman and the woodcutter came, but she sat down so often, her wanderings were like the flight of some young bird, which flies but for short distances and then takes rest. She now remembered that she had felt this weariness ever since she returned from her journey to the capital. In the winter she had not regarded it with care, but she now thought she could understand Walpurga's urgency that she should go still higher than the farm pasturage; she was ill, and must get well again, and yet she felt no pain. Deep within the wood, she once tried to sing a scale but she could not accomplish it. Her head fell on her breast; thus then —

Franz came on Sunday morning, and there was much joy in the pasture-hut.

"Oh! how nice it is," exclaimed Gundel, when

she was alone with Franz, but Irma was not sitting far off and she repeatedly heard the words: "Oh! how nice it is! Most days I have my arms only for work, to-day I have them also to throw them round somebody's neck, and to hug and kiss him."

Gundel, the heavy slow girl, was up here quick and animated. She went in and out the whole day, cleaned and washed and milked, made butter and cheese, and always sang all the time or at any rate hummed a tune to herself; singing filled the place of thought to her; she was like a bird, which, so long as it is day, flutters about and sings. Love had awakened her mind, and the independence, with which she was allowed to act here, allowed her to give free vent to her natural cheerfulness of disposition.

Irma contemplated her companion's doings and the life of nature around her, as if she only saw it all, and not as if, standing in the midst of it, she had any part in it herself.

Tradition tells of genii, who fly down from some heaven where they dwell, and look at, settle, and arrange matters here below, and then take wing back again to their abode; they have no share in the world's troubles and cares. — It was thus often with Irma, as if she were withdrawing from all sight, speech, and sympathy, into the one great idea, which ever hovered before her.

She went into the hut, and wrote with a pencil these few additional words in her journal:

"When I die, I beg my brother Bruno to give a portion to Gundel and Franz, that they may establish a household of their own."

She then wrapped the journal again in the bandage,

which she had worn on her brow, laid her hand upon it, and vowed never to write in it again; she had investigated sufficiently the feelings of her mind, she had recorded enough of all that her eye had seen, to reconcile her heavily-injured friend, and to be reconciled with herself; she now only desired to live completely and alone within herself.

Franz had brought the tidings that Walpurga would not come this Sunday, as her boy was unwell; but that next Sunday she hoped to come certainly. Irma was almost glad to be allowed fully to enter into her present life, before she spoke with any one who knew her. She was now entirely with people, to whom her past life was unknown, and they left her alone according to her desire, and only spoke to her, when she asked a question.

On the second and third Sunday also, Walpurga came not, though she sent up some bread and salt. Irma scarcely inquired even in thought, why Walpurga did not come.

"A life, in which nothing happens," — how had Irma once rejected the idea; it was now her own lot, and not the slightest feeling arose within her that it might be otherwise. She worked but little, and then she would lie for hours together on her favourite spot on the declivity of the mountain.

The whole life of nature shed its influence upon her; she greeted the first morning dew, and her hair was damped with the evening moisture; she was quietly happy, free from all yearning desire, like the vast nature around her; only often in the night, when she looked up to the stars, which glittered resplendently on these heights, her mind would rise into infinity.

She looked at the mountains — there, as on the day of creation stood the indented ranges, which no human foot had trod, which only the clouds have touched, and on which only the eagle's eye has rested. Familiar as she was with the life of plants and birds, she now scarcely regarded them, they belonged to her, as her limbs did to her body; nature was no longer strange to her, she felt herself as a part of it; she had reached that state of continuity, in which life goes on like a pure natural necessity, without questionings daily to be solved, as everything rises out of chaos. The sun rises and sets daily, the grass grows, the cows graze, and the law of life is laid upon man: Work and think! The world around thee is subject to that law, and thy life also; it belongs to man alone, that he perceives what he has to do, and thus obeys his nature freely.

Clear as the blue sky above was that bright soul, unoppressed as she now was with the remembrance that she had ever lived otherwise and had ever erred.

The fourth Sunday came, and Irma went early some distance down the mountain. On the boundary stone, denoting the limits of the royal forest, she sat down and waited for Hansei and Walpurga. Now that the peasant and his wife had distinctly sent word that they were coming, Irma was again full of longing for Walpurga, for the only being, who had known her of old and could confirm her as to who she was.

She sat on the boundary stone, with her hat off, and her forehead free; supporting her head in her hand and thinking why deep within the back ground of the soul there is something that strives against the surrender of our personality, and the cessation of the

desire to know who we are, or to learn it from others. The prisoner in the galley is only called by his number, but in himself he knows who he is, and he cannot forget it. Why can we not blend ourselves freely with free nature?

Her hand sank deeper down, but presently she heard voices, and she quickly rose.

"Isn't that our Irmgard?" asked Hansei.

"Yes, it's her!"

Walpurga hastened to her and held out her hand, but Hansei stood as if petrified, he had never before seen such a being, it always seemed to him as if she were something supernatural; her whole face appeared radiant, her eyes had grown larger, and the high noble brow above them was white and smooth as marble. Walpurga too, who had known Irma in the height of her beauty, regarded her now with a different aspect, for she was suffering for her sake as the solitary girl could little dream; involuntarily she placed her hand on her heart, for it palpitated.

"Why don't you give me your hand, Hansei?" asked Irma.

"I — I —— I've never seen you like this."

A slight flush overspread her forehead, she passed her hand across it, and then extended it again to Hansei, who pressed it in his excitement so violently that it hurt her.

They walked together towards the pasture-hut, and scarcely had they gone a few steps before they met the little pitch-man. He had secretly followed Irma, to take care of her as he had often done before; he feared for her, for he saw that there was something the matter

with her, and therefore he did not like to leave her alone.

"She looks splendid, don't she?" said he to Hansei, who had remained behind with him, while Irma and Walpurga walked on in front. "But she lives like a little child on nothing but milk, and she will not bear in mind that up here the evenings get quickly cold, and she will always be sitting out in the damp night, and I feel sometimes as if she were no mortal thing, but an angel, which would some day spread its wings and fly away — yes, you may laugh — and up here we're not so very far from the sky, we're the nearest neighbours here to Heaven, as my sister used to say." —

Hansei went away with the uncle to look at the herd. Besides the calf born on the first day, two others had seen the light here and all were well. It was an hour before Hansei came to the pasture-hut and his whole manner expressed satisfaction.

Meanwhile Walpurga had examined everything in the hut, and she too had found cleanliness and order every where.

In the afternoon came the nearest neighbour, from a pasturage about an hour's walk off, and brought with her her cittern.

It was no small condescension in the freehold peasant's wife to sing with Gundel and the neighbour, but she did so; Franz also was able to take his part, and the little pitch-man was not wanting in the chorus; Hansei however could not bring out a note, but his incapability looked like dignity: the great peasant did not sing any longer.

"It's only here that one can sing, for it is not to

be done yonder, where one comes up from the town," cried Gundel after the first song. "If one speaks a word loud there or sings, there's such an echo."

She ran to the place, and gave the Tyrolean mountain cry, and every height and ravine re-echoed the sound.

"You ought to sing too," said Walpurga, turning to Irma, "you've all no idea how beautifully she can sing."

"I can't any longer," replied Irma, "my voice is gone."

"Then play us something. You can play the zitter splendidly," urged Walpurga.

All joined in the request, and Irma was at length obliged to comply. The little pitch-man held his breath; he had never before heard such beautiful playing and no one yet knew what Irma could do. She soon changed into the well known air, and the little pitch-man struck up: "We two are so united;" — it was a happy, cheerful hour.

Hansei now took his wife, Irma, and the little pitch-man to the place from which they could catch a glimpse of the old home-lake; it sparkled brightly, and Hansei repeated that it seemed to him like the look of a human being who had known one from youth up.

Walpurga turned to Irma; she was afraid that this sight might awaken sadness in her, but she only said: "It gives me joy too."

Hansei now explained to Irma the whole neighbourhood, where this and that place lay; he shewed her the mountain where he had planted so many trees; the

forest itself was not to be seen, but the rocky peaks which rose above it.

Walpurga meanwhile went aside with her uncle and said:

"Uncle, my mother is dead"

"Yes, I know that, and you can't think of her more than I do; only ask Irmgard there how often we talk of her; it always seems to me as if she were in the next room, it isn't far up here between us and the sky, she can hear every word we say."

"Yes, uncle, but let me go on, I have got something to say to you."

It was however a hard task to make the uncle listen quietly, for he had always so much to say himself. In spite of his repeated interruptions, Walpurga continued:

"Uncle, you are a sensible man —"

"May be, but it hasn't helped me much in life."

"I want to tell you something —"

"Well, well, only say what you have to say."

"I am very anxious about our Irmgard —"

"There's no need for it, I watch her like the apple of my eye. So you may be quite easy."

"Yes uncle, I know that, but there are bad men abroad, and they hunt after any they want, up to the very tops of the mountains —"

"Yes, I know, the gendarme has many a one —"

"Uncle, do listen to me patiently!"

"Yes, yes; why, I don't speak a word."

"Well, uncle, my mother knew too, who Irmgard is."

"And I know too, you needn't tell me anything

then. I know her out and out, I'm not so stupid, rely upon it."

"Yes, uncle, all right; I wanted to confide to you —"

"You may trust me with anything, on that point I could call your mother in heaven to witness."

"It's not necessary! Well, uncle, Irmgard has had a troublesome life —"

"I know that already, I saw it in the town there, that there must have been something, that perhaps she had to marry some one that she didn't like? Is she illegitimate or perhaps she has got a husband already, and has gone from him? She looked so at the big houses — and has always wanted to creep away into herself."

Walpurga looked surprised at her uncle who really would not allow her to speak, and suddenly the thought arose in her: Thou wast thyself so, once, thou hast fancied that thou must always chatter, instead of hearing what others had to say, when they wanted to talk to thee. She looked long at her uncle, and the latter taking it for praise, told her now for the first time how he had felt on that journey with Irma, and of all that he had seen with her, — the lions, and the serpents, and the white priests out of the Zauberflöte were all mixed together in confusion.

Walpurga remembered that it was not necessary to violate the duties of secrecy; she therefore only told her uncle that he should never leave Irma alone, and that if any stranger came — whoever he might be — he should take her secretly into the wood so that no one should see her.

The uncle promised. "Yes," he added, "it's wonderful in this world. Only think, the herbs which I take

into the little town for the apothecary, they are for the baths of the young countess of Wildenort, the daughter-in-law of him whom I used to know; and as I was standing there in front of the apothecary's, a man came riding past on a beautiful glossy black horse, its limbs looked as if they had been turned in a lathe, and the man had a child sitting in front of him on the horse, a boy about our Peter's size, in a blue frock, and with a feather in his hat, and the boy was so like our Irmgard it might have been her own child, and then the apothecary says to me, that's the Count of Wildenort, the son of the man whom I used to know, and as he rides past, says I, good morning, Sir Count! He pulls up, and asks me, how do you know me? — and I answer, I knew your noble father, and he was a true man. — And what do'ye think he said to that? Nothing at all; he rode away without even thanking me. I've been told that he's not a man like his father, and his mother-in-law, she has him under her thumb so that he dare not say a word. But the child is beautiful, and so like our Irmgard that his face might have been cut out of the same block. It's wonderful what things one meets with in the world."

Walpurga trembled, and she made her uncle give her his word that he would never mention Irmgard to any single person down there in the little town.

The uncle promised this too, and moreover that he would make no observations on the matter before Irmgard.

Towards evening Walpurga and Hansei went homewards again, and when the night had come on, Franz returned also. The inhabitants of the pasture-hut were again alone, and not a word more was spoken

among them; for to-day they had spoken and heard enough. All was silent again on the pasturage, only the cow-bells sounded from the forest and the green declivities, and the stars glittered over head. Irma sat long at the place where a glimpse is caught of the lake, and it was late when she repaired to rest.

TENTH CHAPTER.

IRMA worked only for a few hours every day at her work-board, she was now obliged to compel herself to work almost more than at first; her eye was always intently fixed upon great and vast objects; but when she left her work, the scene seemed new to her, and she beheld the splendour of the highlands with fresh delight.

The little pitch-man had his own schemes of diplomacy. He begged Irma to accompany him in his search for plants and roots, as he was old, and could not always tell but that he might lose his footing, and then some one would be near him who could call for help.

Irma now wandered the greater part of the day with the little pitch-man through the forest over hill and dale. She was especially happy when they came to the place where the stream took its rise.

It flowed quietly out of a dark rocky hollow, and took at once a bold leap down the height, often impeded by fragments of rock, now gliding over them now forcing its way below them, until in the first valley a vast lake was formed, surrounded by tall

silver fir-trees. It was from here that the stream flowed over extensive table-land, and finding a smoother bed, glided gently down a second mountain into the valley below.

The little pitch-man saw plainly that Irma liked to be here; he even thought that he had once heard her singing audibly above the rushing and roaring of the waters, and it was a strange coincidence that he now found most of the herbs here of which he was in search. He had also the pleasure now and then of discovering a bird's nest which he shewed to Irma, who was as much delighted with it as a little child. The animals here seemed to have no fear of man, and the little pitch-man asserted that Irma had such kindly eyes, that the birds did not fly away from her; indeed they hopped around her as if she were an old familiar, and the mother bird in the nest looked at her without alarm, and did not take wing.

Thus Irma sat often whole mornings by the spring, and scarcely conscious of it herself, she would now and then throw some flower which she had plucked into the bubbling stream.

Down below in the valley where Gunther lived, through whose grounds the stream flowed, a beautiful boy was sitting on its banks, and by his side was a red-haired servant in livery.

The boy told the servant to fish out for him a beautiful flower which was just floating past; the servant scrambled down to the edge of the stream, but the boy quickly threw a stone into the water so that it splashed, and the servant exclaimed: "Young sir, you've ill behaved again."

"Is he at his foolish tricks again," said a tall

handsome young man with a dissipated expression of face, who now approached; "what are you doing, Eberhard?"

The boy looked startled, and the servant said respectfully:

"Sir, the young master and I were only making fun with each other."

The young man took the boy by the hand, and walked with him through the meadow to a beautifully situated country house, the servant Fitz following. The man in advance was Count Bruno von Wildenort and the boy was his son.

Bruno had strictly forbidden that the boy should play by the water; he had an especial fear of water, for it had brought such terrible misfortune upon his family; but the boy was always attracted to the wild stream, as if by some evil influence, and Fitz, who ever complied with his young master's wish, abetted him in secret, and accompanied him.

Bruno gave a sign of disapproval to his servant Fitz, and went into the garden of the country house. His wife was sitting here in a large armchair; not far from her, a little girl was playing on the gravel path, and an infant was being carried up and down by a nurse. The matin bell sounded, and presently the mother-in-law appeared through the garden door, with a servant behind her, carrying a prayer-book sparkling with jewels, and an embroidered cushion.

With the satisfied and restful air of one who has already fulfilled her higher duties, the baroness greeted her family. Bruno gave her his arm, Arabella followed them, and they sat down to breakfast which was prepared in the arbour.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the baroness, "what shall we set about to-day? the day is beautiful and the weather seems inclined to hold. The apothecary tells me, that some hours from here, there is an extremely beautiful pasture-hut, from which the view must be exquisite. How would it be, if we sent the servants beforehand, so that we could dine up there?"

"Permit me, my gracious mother-in-law, to make you a proposal?" replied Bruno timidly.

"Well, make a proposal; don't leave all the trouble to me. What have you therefore to propose in this fatally wearisome solitude, where we are thrown upon the odious privy councillor and his pedantic woman-kind? Pray, propose something."

"My humble proposal is —"

"Do not make such tedious preambles —"

Bruno bit his lips, then he began, smiling:

"I wish to act in your interest; I will first of all go to the pasturage, and see that the roads are good, and that you are not exposed to any disappointment, for, as a rule, these pretty tenders of cattle on the pasturage, are not *au naturel* all that the stage represents them."

"Thank you, you are indeed amiable. When will you undertake the reconnoitring?"

"To-day, if you desire it."

"He would like to lead bachelor life for once and to have a day free," said the baroness, smiling, as she turned to her daughter. "Oh, I know him! Shall we give him a day?" she asked roguishly.

"You are very kind," said Bruno. He always retained the utmost gallantry of manner to the baroness, in spite of all her biting remarks; she had twice al-

ready paid Bruno's gaming and other debts; for Bruno had not yet received his sister's fortune, as her corpse had not been found; it was not till the following year, five years after her death, that she would be declared unheard of by the authorities.

"Yes, dear Bruno," said Arabella at length, for she deeply felt her husband's slavery: "do you go alone, and leave us Fitz here, for Eberhard has got so accustomed to him, that he will play with no one else."

Bruno went to the apothecary, and learned that the pasturage which he knew only by report, belonged to the free-hold peasant, who lived a few hours' distant.

He therefore rode in the first place to the freehold farm.

Walpurga was sitting at the window, playing with the child on her lap. She saw the horseman galloping along, and involuntarily she pressed her hand to her eyes, and bent back, as if he were going to ride straight over her.

She saw the horseman dismount, and Hansei greet him and lead the strange horse to the stable, and then he came with the stranger into the room.

"Good day, Sir Count," said Walpurga, composing herself. "This is good, that you will pay us a visit."

She held out her hand to him, but Bruno twisted his moustache, and did not offer his in return.

"Ah, it's you!" he said. "I didn't know that you were the mistress here. So, this is the farm, which you paid for down in gold? You are wise, but keep quiet, I will make no inquiries."

Hansei saw how his wife grew pale.

"Who is the man? Who is it who speaks so con-

temptuously with you?" asked he, drawing himself up.

"Be quiet," said Walpurga soothingly. "It is a gentleman from the court, who likes joking."

"May be!" — muttered Hansei. "I only wished to say somewhat to you, Sir, — may I ask your name?"

"Count Wildenort."

"Well then, Sir Count, I have not asked you who you are, and I bid you welcome and your horse too, and now I beg you to tell me what you want, and to leave my wife alone. In my house and home, I allow no jests which do not please me; and were the king to come and make one which I didn't like, I would kick him out. No offence! but every man speaks as he feels. So, now take a seat."

Hansei put on his hat, and pressed it firmly down, as if as a sign that he was master here.

Bruno said smiling:

"You have an honest husband, Walpurga."

"That's enough," interrupted Hansei, "what do you wish, Sir Count?"

"Nothing amiss. I hear you have a pasturage on your land, which is considered the finest in the whole highlands."

"Yes, yes," said Hansei, smirking, "it lies convenient, and is a smooth bit of land, but I'm not inclined to sell it."

"Nor do I wish to purchase it, I only want to spend a day up there."

"Certainly, but what are you now meaning by it?"

"Are the roads good up there, and is it clean?"

Doesn't one bring back a herd upon one's body, when one comes down?"

"You're right, Walpurga, he is joking," said Hansei, turning to his wife, and then he added to Bruno:

"The road is good enough, and if one doesn't mind an hour's circuit, one can ride almost there. If you will, Sir Count, I'll show you the way up."

"Certainly; my wife and my mother-in-law would like to see the pasturage."

Walpurga heard with alarm the danger which threatened Irma, but quickly collecting herself, she said laughingly:

"No, Sir Count, women folk can't get up there, such as we, can of course, but then we have to turn our petticoats into breeches." She laughed aloud, and Bruno laughed too; he pictured his mother-in-law in this costume; she had had many in her life, but such a one never.

He had only ridden out, that he might dissuade his mother-in-law from the plan, under pretext of authentic experience, for he knew that such an excursion would be a day of bitterest slavery for him. Nothing would be right, he would always have to submit to reproaches and biting words, as if everything were his fault, that there was a swamp here and boulders there, and that there were only mountains of ice to be seen from the pasturage, and no vanilla-ices to eat! he knew these pleasure parties, in which he often would have gladly given way to the rage he experienced.

Walpurga found an opportunity to tell her husband that he must keep back the count, as well as he could, from his visit to the pasture-hut, and Hansei laughed

till he shewed his wisdom-teeth, and said in the stable to the count, who was looking after his horse:

"There's a relation of ours up there, who is rather demented."

Walpurga too came into the stable, for she was afraid that her husband might betray something, and Bruno now asked her if she knew what had happened to her companion at court.

Walpurga nodded and wept.

"Yes," said she, "I may say no man on earth has suffered more about her than I have."

She wept so bitterly that Bruno consoled her.

At last he rode away.

For days, Walpurga felt the effects of her alarm in every limb. And again she thought it would be better if Irma were discovered, for that perhaps she were ill and would die with them before her time. But then, if she were discovered, that would kill her at once.

This was the cause of the uneasiness she had manifested on Sunday at the pasturage, and why she had enjoined the greatest circumspection upon the uncle, but yet the thought clung to her, that there would be an end to it soon, if one only knew how, and if there was only something to be done. There was, however, nothing that she could do, she must let happen what will.

ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

GUNTHER'S garden was full of blossoms and verdure, the birds sang, and the forest stream which flowed through the grounds, ran murmuring along, as if sorry that its course took it so rapidly away. Within the house too, joy and happiness were abiding. Bronnen was engaged to Paula. The love that had silently sprung up and ripened between them, now suddenly burst forth in rich exuberance. Bronnen wished to call Paula his own, before the visit of the court, so that she might then feel less constrained and might become accustomed to the royal circle. Fran Gunther saw with fear her child entering the stirring life of the capital; she had an unconquerable fear of it. Bronnen told his future parents-in-law, that the liberal reforms in the state were far less difficult to carry out than the reform of court etiquette; hitherto there had existed an unmoveable and old established custom, that the ladies of the citizen-class were not themselves entitled to appear at court whatever the position of the husband. Bronnen had not been able to effect any alteration in this, until he had made it a cabinet question.

Gunther smiled at this statement. He knew the arbitrary character of etiquette, which did not allow itself to be broken through. Frau Gunther on the other hand was alarmed at it. It occurred to her with some anxiety that Paula would be the first lady after the queen at the court and in the capital; she would have been glad if Bronnen would have accepted a minor position; but she loved him with a maternal affection,

which was expressed by a look full of brightness, whenever her eye rested on the stately sterling man; indeed she went so far that Gunther said smiling: "You are disloyal to your home" — for she had maintained, that a man, so noble in all respects and so dignified in all his ideas, and at the same time both yielding and decided in character, could only be really developed in a monarchical government. In a republic, there is a certain want of form, an indulgence of personal inclination; that self-respect on the other hand, which is at the same time always so full of respect towards others, is the peculiar ornament of court-life; and Bronnen had a talent, which was especially calculated to place every one at ease with him, he had a talent of hearing well, he was ready to wait attentively until the speaker had finished all that he wished to say.

Beaming, however, as was the happiness of the parents, it was but a mild reflexion of that of the betrothed. After Paula with full sincerity had acknowledged her fear lest she should fail to satisfy such a man as Bronnen, she was soon set at rest again; for she felt that there is a fulness of love in the heart, which comprehends the highest, and what is still more, the most enduring happiness. Through forest and field, Bronnen and Paula wandered, and Bronnen perceived ever anew the strong pure feelings, which an elevated domestic atmosphere had firmly established in his chosen one. At every fresh chord which he struck, he found a store of rich thought ready, a candid and pure power of susceptibility. He praised his fate, which had thus led his choice, and he rejoiced in the conviction that all self-improvement is achieved and perfected by mutual effort.

Frau Gunther was sitting with her husband in his study. She looked now and then through the window at the loving pair, who were walking up and down in the garden.

"Yesterday" — said she — "he made a strange confession to Paula and me. If another had told it me, I should not have believed it."

"And what is it?"

"He told us, and his voice was much agitated as he spoke, that he had once loved the Countess Wildenort. Did you know it?"

"No. But I can only regard it as a very suitable attachment. She was worthy of the best of men, could she but have kept her natural impulses under control, and my good Eberhard well deserved to call such a man his son."

"Tell me," said Frau Gunther, "do you consider it right — I have not otherwise perceived the slightest shadow in him — do you consider it right that he should have told Paula of it? It will make Paula still more anxious, she will compare herself with the brilliant-countess, and —"

"You may be quite easy on that point," interrupted Gunther. "A heart like that of our child, feeling in itself the full power of love, possesses an inexhaustible wealth, which no brilliancy in another can disturb by its superiority; but that Bronnen told her of this, makes him, if it were possible, still dearer to me. It is not every man who is so happy as I was and am, in his first love being his only one; most have to pass through disappointment and loss, and that man may call his lot happy, who like Bronnen has come out of the ordeal, pure and entire; for this is, the more I consider the

world from a distance, the great misery which has befallen man, and — if the race are to be saved, a revolution must be produced in men's minds: it cannot be, that a life tarnished by vice should go on parallel with that which is regulated and domestic, creating discord in humanity and in every man within himself. We have watched over our child so long and so faithfully, and, with all outward show of prosperity, I should have the deepest heartache, were I to see a man offering his hand to her, who, according to the expression falsely coined by society, has lived fast."

Frau Gunther looked at her husband with a beaming expression. "I find that Bronnen has converted you from your aversion to the military profession," she said softly.

"In no wise," replied Gunther, "only Bronnen has not been affected by it. He unites with resolute courage and easy acknowledgment of the power of others, a profound and serious mind. It is almost like a miracle, like some beautiful and unexpected dispensation, that just now, when I wished to produce in my work the image of a pure active man, of modern times, — that just now the genuine traits of such a one come before me in a man, who is to belong to me through the freedom of nature. It is as if mysterious powers brought us just that which the mental eye was striving with every effort to pourtray to itself. Bronnen appeared before me, as if he were stepping forth from my work."

Gunther had never before spoken thus of his labours.

"Understand me rightly," added Gunther, "I see in no one the perfect ideal of pure humanity; but I see traits in every man, and I see many especially in Bronnen. Men appear to me in their reality beauti-

ful, but in truth still more beautiful. I rejoice that the generation coming after us is different to our own, and yet we may say, that the good we have achieved lives on with them; the enthusiasm of the new generation is different to our own, but I believe that its moderation renders it also more enduring. Still — I will not now lose myself too far in the subject. I only wanted to say to you, that I have discovered that the division of feeling in modern times arises essentially from the fact that religion has held up belief, art has held up beauty, and politics have held up liberty, each separate from morality, and yet they are one and must be so, as the two sides of one and the same substance. I hope that I shall be able to make this intelligible to the world, and may contribute somewhat to the unity of true piety, beauty, and liberty, with morality prominent above all close by their side and graciously tolerated."

The conversation was interrupted, for the Count von Wildenort, his wife, and mother-in-law were announced; a message was sent out inviting them to go into the garden room, and presently the visitors, Gunther and his wife and Bronnen and his betrothed, were all there in lively conversation.

Frau Gunther spoke exclusively with the young countess, who was much the better for her sojourn under medical care. Baroness Steigeneck kept the lovers engaged in conversation, and Frau Gunther often looked across to her daughter and future son, as though she must take away a reptile crawling near them. Bruno talked cheerfully with Gunther and told him that by command of their Majesties he should probably come again during their visit here; he perhaps in-

tended by this to commission Gunther to let the command reach him, for the baroness wished before the arrival of the court — her exclusion pressed heavily upon her — to return to her castle with her children and grand-children, and then to proceed to some fashionable watering-place; she was full of impatience till she reached some gaming table.

They took leave with a great many words, they thanked for the delightful country retreat, they envied the people who could live here as on some happy island, and at last they went to the carriage which was waiting for them in the road.

When the visitors were gone, Frau Gunther returned again to the garden room and opened all the windows, so that a fresh current of air might pass through the room: it was necessary to disperse the strong perfumes of the baroness.

Bronnen left the town that evening. The carriage drove by the side, and they accompanied him for a short distance. He and Paula walked in front, Gunther and his wife behind. The adieu was simple and hearty, they rejoiced in the days of enjoyment they had had, and looked forwards to new ones, for Bronnen was to return with the king.

On the way back, Paula walked between her parents, her cheeks glowing with excitement; Gunther however left his family before they reached home, for he had again to go to Count Wildenort, to give his wife some further directions.

Mother and daughter went on alone, and as Frau Gunther looked at her child, she saw a silent tear in her eye, though her face was beaming with brightness.

"You ought to be abundantly happy," said Frau

Gunther. "You have a lover, who may be compared with your father, and I can wish nothing better for you than that you may enjoy all that I have enjoyed, and that you may have the happiness some day, which I have had in my children and in you especially."

"Ah, mother," said Paula, "I cannot comprehend it at all that I let him go back alone, and I can as little comprehend that I am to leave you and my father and sister; but Bronnen" — she invariably called him by his surname — "says that he hopes my father will again return to the capital; he might select any post he pleased, for the king wishes it."

"I do not think that your father will consent to that. But, my child, let nothing of the sort disturb you; you may be happy, for your happiness lives in us all."

On their way home, the two ladies met several beautiful horses and carriages, sent in advance of the queen, whose arrival was expected within the next few days. The high road was a scene of animation, and the little town was full of wondering and delighted crowds. The court was coming! And for all this, they were indebted to Gunther alone! — The wife and daughter were respectfully greeted, and even in the distance it was plain to see that the towns-people were telling the newly arrived court servants who they were; for they also acknowledged them with great submission.

As they went on, they met a vehicle, which looked as if it belonged to a fairy tale. Two tiny dun ponies, with short-clipped black manes, and gay trappings, were drawing an ornamental little carriage with low wheels. As if they divined what was passing by, the children came from the peasant's houses across the meadows, jumping over the hillocks, to admire the

fairy-like carriage of the crown prince, following it with shouting through the town, where the crowd of children grew larger and larger, up to the dairy farm.

Paula looked smiling at it all. She paused with her mother in front of the house, where a sign-board announced that henceforth this would be the new telegraph office. Here, she thought, she would send her messages, and from here, she would receive those forwarded from her paternal home.

The telegraph line, which Irma had seen put up not far from the freehold farm, was in preparation for the queen's summer sojourn in the neighbourhood.

When Gunther's household was stirring on the following morning, the first telegram reached the little town. It was addressed to Paula, and was as follows:

"I inaugurate the electric spark in the service of love; I am well; I greet you, your father, mother, and sister.

BRONNEN."

TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The school boys and girls were ranged on both sides of the road under the fruit trees. The bells rang, music sounded, guns fired and echoed from the rugged heights.

The queen was entering the town.

She sat in an open carriage drawn by four white horses, by her side sat the prince, a boy with fair golden hair, and a fresh complexion. The carriage stopped at the boundary. A maiden dressed in the

becoming costume of the country bade the queen welcome with a poem composed by the schoolmaster, and presented her with a nosegay of Alpine flowers. The queen received the nosegay with an expression of gracious kindness; she bowed on all sides, held out her hand to the girl, and the prince also extended his little hand and said in mountain dialect — the whole town council, the catholic and evangelical ecclesiastics heard it — “Good day!”

Hundreds of voices shouted “Hurra,” and flowers were scattered on the way.

The queen drove through the little town, which was decorated with flags and garlands, to the dairy farm. The court cavaliers who had preceded her were there in waiting, and Gunther among them. He wore the grand orders on his breast, which the inhabitants of the little town had never yet seen on him.

The carriage passed through the triumphal arch; it stopped and the queen alighted.

She held out her hand to Gunther, who would gladly have kissed it, but he turned to the prince and kissed him. He was so agitated too that he could scarcely utter a word, at length he said:

“I bid your Majesty heartily welcome to my native soil.”

“Wherever you are is home soil,” replied the queen. She passed on, leading her boy by the hand.

The mistress of the chamber, Countess Brinkenstein, the lady in waiting, Constance, and other court ladies, now greeted Gunther likewise; there were, however, others recently appointed whom Gunther did not know.

The queen was soon, with her more immediate

suite, upon the great terrace, which commanded an enchanting view over valley and mountain. Gunther explained to the queen the mountain-range with the intervening valleys. He told her the names of the principal peaks, and added here and there some historical association; he was presenting to the queen the leading features of his native country. The evening twilight now began to set in, and the roseate hue of an evening sky rested on the heights above. They stood silent for a time looking up towards the mountains, where, unknown to all, a woman was looking dreamily out into the wide world, and looking around had started at the sound of the thundering echo of the guns from the neighbouring steeps. Down there, she thought, there is a noisy feast going on; and she, who had once stood amongst those assembled there, ranking with the most admired — lived silently and solitarily within herself.

By the fence of the enclosed park, the inhabitants of the little town were gathered, and many also who had come from the villages and scattered farms; they all looked for the queen; every one wished to have remarked something especial in her, in the horses, in the carriage, or in the servants.

The vesper bell now sounded; the men took off their hats, and all prayed silently, and then proceeded homewards.

The night quickly came on, the court party dispersed, and the queen asked Gunther whether there was not a path to his house which did not lead through the town? Gunther replied that the king had had one made round the shoulder of the hill.

The queen looked down. She felt comforted in her heart by this thoughtful care; and had the king

been now present, she would have said to him a word of kindness such as he had not for a long time heard from her.

"I should like to visit your family," said the queen.

"I shall have the honour of introducing them to your Majesty to-morrow."

"It is so beautiful, and the evening is so soft, let us go there to-day."

The queen and Gunther, and many ladies and gentlemen of the court went along the new path to Gunther's house.

"Will you not quickly send word to your ladies that her Majesty is coming?" said the mistress of the chamber graciously to Gunther as they left the farm. The entire absence of form in the queen's proposal was certainly contrary to all rule, although the sojourn in the country permitted a certain amount of freedom.

Gunther, equally courteously, declined making any notification.

He had a proud feeling of self-confidence that even a queen with her suite might at any hour enter his house, and she would find it suitably prepared, and his wife and children equally so.

The inspector's wife, the wise Stasi, had however heard whither they were going, so she hurried beforehand through the town to Frau Gunther to tell her who was coming.

The court, therefore, found the garden-room beautifully lighted up, and Frau Gunther with her two daughters greeted her Majesty at the garden-entrance dutifully, though not perhaps in perfect accordance with the forms of court etiquette.

"I could not wait," said the queen — her voice

now sounded unlike her tone of former days — "I felt impelled to pay you a visit to-day, to express my congratulations to you. I presume you are the *fiancée* of our prime minister, Bronnen?" said she, turning to Paula.

Paula bowed so correctly, that the mistress of the chamber nodded with satisfaction. The queen held out her hand to Paula, and kissed her forehead.

"I shall now often see you," she added; "and it will be pleasant to remember that I have known you in your father's house."

She invited Frau Gunther to approach, and walked with her through the garden.

"So I must see you for the first time to-day," said the queen. "I hope I am no stranger to you?"

"Your Majesty, it is the first time in my life that I have spoken with a queen, and I beg —"

"Your husband is a fatherly friend to me, and I wish that you too in a similar manner — but let us leave that to be decided by our mutual inclinations. Only, as a Swiss woman, lay aside a little of your prejudice against a queen."

"Your Majesty, I am a citizen of your own country."

"I am delighted to become acquainted with you first in your own house. Do you still sing much? I have heard that you used to sing beautifully."

"Your Majesty, I give that up now to the younger voices of my children. Paula sings a good deal."

"Ah! I am glad of that! I have long regretted that no lady in our more immediate circle sings well."

Like a passing shadow, the remembrance of Irma flitted gloomily through the queen's mind. She stood by the stream which was flowing down from the pas-

turage heights, and which here gushed and murmured loudly.

The queen only remained a short time. As she went away, she said to Frau Gunther at the garden-door:

"Will you not accompany us a part of the way?"

"No; I thank your Majesty."

"Then I shall see you to-morrow. Good night! Let us be good neighbours!"

The queen went away.

Gunther knew that the court ladies and gentlemen would discuss in public and in private the unheard-of indecorum of any one declining the expressed wish of the queen; but he did not say a word to his wife — he could give her free scope, certain that she would do what was right; and if she even left certain conventionalities disregarded, she would still with true tact manage and arrange everything; and the very fact that she had slightly repelled the queen's extremely gracious advance, and would not let her friendship be demanded as a favour, was a surer pledge to him than anything.

"I am glad," said Frau Gunther to her husband, when they were together in the drawing-room, "that our Paula will be introduced into court life from her father's house, and the queen seems to me indeed a noble nature."

Gunther assented, adding that Paula had shown even in this short meeting, the practical influence of her lover's advice; for Bronnen had told her that one is free at court when, without laying any peculiar stress on the trivialities of forms, one so makes them one's

own, that they can be used without difficulty, like rules of grammar.

It was a moonlight night, and Paula sang in the stillness of it with her full-sounding voice and deep passionate expression, the last stanza of that song of Göthe's, which was Bronnen's especial favourite:

"Crown of existence,
Bliss without rest,
Thou'rt love confessed."

And yonder on the heights, whither no voice from below reached, there sat, wrapped in her blue covering, a solitary girl; and through her mind there passed soundlessly that song of the same master — that song of songs, in which the soul, set free from all its burdens, is united with enduring nature:

"Filling copse and vale again
With a haze of glory,
Loosening the spirit's chain,
The fetters I had o'er me."

The court ladies at the dairy-farm chattered long together; those who had not been able to accompany the queen envied the others who had had such a speedy opportunity of seeing Bronnen's betrothed. What could there have been in a citizen's daughter for Bronnen, who might have had the hand of the highest in the land, just to have chosen her? Some considered her awkward, others too confident; even her beauty was a doubtful question. The young court ladies were jokingly informed that the physician would now for some days hold a parade of feelings and universal ideas, and this *au grand sérieux*.

The moon shone brightly on the mountains and in the valley, where at length everything slumbered.

Only the spring gurgled and the stream murmured, and now and then a mountain-call sounded from the heights above.

A bright day dawned.

Gunther was early with the queen. He was resolved for the next few weeks to sacrifice his morning quiet; he wished to devote himself entirely to his friend, and he looked forward to resume his undisturbed repose when her visit was over.

Again, as it had been five years before, he sat in the morning on the terrace, not looking out towards the distant mountains, but now surrounded by them; and again, as then, the queen appeared in her white morning robe, and gave him her morning greeting, but her whole nature was now changed; her step was more certain, and her words more decided.

"We will make no programme of how we will live here," said the queen, as she walked up and down the garden with Gunther; "we will take the day as it comes."

She expressed her pleasure that she now knew his wife and daughters; and she told him that she thought he had done well in the capital to have kept his domestic life apart from the court, and only to have made a few exceptions to his limited intercourse.

Again like a passing shadow, the remembrance of Irma flitted by in the early morning; for the queen knew that Gunther had introduced her in his home. The memory of Irma never seemed fully banished and buried.

"Permit me, your Majesty," said the physician, "still to draw up a little programme; it has only a few paragraphs. Permit me to state my motive for it. I

have never been able to express myself in writing on this matter; I can only do so personally. Your Majesty, I have to accuse myself to you of a great error."

"You? of a great error?"

"Yes; and it makes me free to be allowed to confess. Your Majesty, I do not ask on what terms you are now with your royal consort. That he has prepared all this for you here, and the manner in which it has been done, is the act of a tender feeling —"

"And I acknowledge the act perfectly; but still I cannot —"

"I must interrupt you, your Majesty, for this is my request: promise me that we shall never more speak together of the terms on which you are with his Majesty. Long ago, in the terrible conflict of your mind, I believed — and this is just my great error — to be able to lead your Majesty by a free and more comprehensive line of thought to a right judgment, and from thence to reawakened love. I erred, and committed an offence against a simple principle. Feelings will not allow themselves to be governed by thoughts; and moreover, in a case like that alluded to, any third person allowing himself to interfere is rightly rejected. He who wishes to be mediator, only makes the cleft wider. Husband and wife can alone find reconciliation between themselves. I will say no more; I will only beg your Majesty — for thus only can we meet each other unembarrassed, and your royal consort himself when he comes — let us speak no more of this matter. You have no other confidant than your own heart, and your own heart alone you must obey, and not be frightened back by any apparent alienation or change of feeling. Is this one favour granted me?"

"Yes; and now not a word further on the subject."

As if they both had cast aside a burden, a ban which had rested upon them, they now conversed freely and cheerfully.

The crownprince was brought in. The physician was delighted at his vigorous appearance, and promised him a little girl as a playfellow, who was born on the same day with himself.

"Mamma, why haven't I a little sister?" asked the crown prince. A deep blush suffused the queen's face . . .

"Little Cornelia is to be your sister," she replied; and gave an order that the prince should be taken to the physician's house to see his playfellow.

The physician gave instructions to Frau von Gerloff that the children were to see the birds' nest in the rose-bush. The prince begged to be allowed to take "Schnipp" and "Schnapp" with him, and soon the two children were driving together in the pretty little carriage through the valley, a little groom managing the tiny horses, and an outrider in front.

At noon, Frau Gunther came with her daughters to visit the queen. By degrees an intimate relation was formed between Gunther's house and the court, as if they were two equal families. No society within circumscribed limits so quickly finds its level as during a temporary residence in the country; the common interest in the pleasures of nature, and its invigorating influence also gives a common tone of feeling.

The days passed happily on, the queen wished for no extraordinary pleasures, and every hour was fully occupied.

The queen said one day to Frau Gunther, that

she was the first citizen's wife with whom she had been on terms of familiar intimacy, and that she could not help admiring her firm and candid mind.

"I must tell you something of my youth," rejoined Frau Gunther, to whom this gracious bestowal of praise was utterly alien.

"Yes, do, I beg you," said the queen encouragingly.

"Your Majesty, I was a happy bride. William was travelling during the vacation, and we wrote often to each other. One day a letter came from him, which offended my pride, and indeed deeply wounded me. I had soared into all sorts of extravagant notions, and he wrote me those words of Lessing's, which Nathan says to the knight-templar: 'Middlingly good like us are to be found everywhere in abundance.'"

"And that wounded you?"

"Yes, your Majesty, it wounded me deeply. Gunther has no vestige of that false modesty, which is all the more vain, the more modest it appears. According to my mind, he was doing himself a wrong by this expression, he, who stood so high in my estimation, and I may as well confess it, he seemed to do me a wrong also; I did not regard myself as middlingly good, I considered myself a highly endowed nature. But from that time I began, and I have learned through my whole life, more and more to perceive that most misery arises from the fact that people who have understanding, culture, and some talent, esteem themselves as more endowed, more highly gifted mortals than others, and hence allow themselves the right of disregarding ordinary barriers and stepping beyond the circumscribed sphere of duty allotted to them. To acknow-

ledge oneself as middlingly good, and in accordance with this acknowledgment to act for oneself and to judge others — this has been the guide of my life, and I beg your Majesty to regard me so also. There are thousands and thousands of women like me in the world. It is just the same in singing. I have found in choir-singing, how many good voices can join in part and be happy to do so, which never desire to attempt a solo."

The queen walked silently beside Frau Gunther. What various applications might be made of all this which had been uttered with an expression of the utmost truth! The queen could refer it to herself, to the king, and to one who was never to be forgotten.

At last, looking up freely, she began:

"I should like to make a request to you;" said she, falteringly, taking out a breast-pin with a large pearl. "Will you accept this as a memento of this hour, as a remembrance of that which I have now received from you."

"Your Majesty," replied Frau Gunther, "I have never in my life accepted anything of the kind. Still, I understand. You, as queen, are accustomed to feel the happiness of giving and of making others happy. I will accept this token, as if it were an unfading flower out of your garden."

Frau Gunther went quietly homewards, satisfied in herself. She paused before the house. On the piano in the large drawing-room, the windows of which were open, a masterly hand was playing with the utmost power and feeling. It could not be Paula. Who might it be?

It was a touching meeting; for alas! it was without

the blessing of sight. The nephew of Frau Gunther, the young man whose compositions Irma had sung years before, and who had once before visited his relations here, at the time when, surprised by a storm during some excursion, he had passed the night at the freehold farm, and had seen Irma, without knowing who she was,—this young man was now, as had been foretold him, completely blind. He had become a master on the piano, and he bore his fate of blindness with manly strength.

Frau Gunther introduced her nephew in the evening to the queen, and it was the first act of friendship bestowed on Frau Gunther, that her Majesty appointed the blind man to be her chamber performer, only desiring that the appointment should await the king's sanction, and he was expected in the next few days.

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

THE king arrived during the night without previous intimation. He wished to avoid all the pomp of reception. He regarded himself as the guest of his royal consort; it was for her alone that he had had this modest summer retreat prepared.

Gunther went on the following morning, decorated with his orders, by the new path from his house to the farm. He felt that this summer life would now be different. There was in it a sort of pervading tone, which now must suffer a change through the presence of a new-comer, were he even of a more yielding nature than the king.

Since that last audience, in which he had had to

thank for the decorations conferred upon him, Gunther had not seen the king again. He was composed. Court forms have this blessing by their fixed continuance, that they demand no momentary state of feeling or animation.

As Gunther thus walked along the path, which was formed round the slope of the projecting hill, a remembrance of Eberhard was involuntarily awakened in him. The early morning, the mountain air, the close fitting uniform, everything was as it used to be tens of years ago.

Eberhard had invariably designated the fulfilment of any form of courtesy, unless prompted by feeling, as barbarousness; he required that at every moment of life one should be true, and not use any word or ceremony which did not proceed from the depths of the heart. Gunther had perceived during the years of his solitude that he too had been guilty of partial derelictions by his concessions; it had become his highest happiness to be now perfectly true to himself and the world, and hence in the work which he had regarded as the result of his life he had given vent to his unbiassed and undissembled feelings.

While thus walking on in thought, he caught sight of the farm, he paused to collect himself. He was now on his way to welcome and pay respect to him, who had wished to strip him of his dignity.

The king too, who had already seen Gunther in the distance, was agitated at the first meeting. He withdrew from the open window, and yet he would gladly have called out welcome to the highly esteemed man; but kingly dignity does not allow of that, and it possesses at the same time this agreeable advantage,

that the one desiring admittance remains in a waiting position, and the one granting admittance retains his natural freedom, or, so to speak, he is in his ease at home, while the other is the stranger.

The physician sent in his name. He was at once admitted. The king advanced a few steps towards him, and said:

"Welcome, dear privy counsellor, I am heartily rejoiced —" he hesitated as he said this, and added, as if suddenly another thought struck him: "I am very glad to be able to congratulate you. One scarcely knows whether to say that you are worthy to gain such a son, or that our Minister Bronnen is worthy to call you father; it is one and the same thing," he concluded with a smile, which had in it something forced.

"I thank your Majesty with great submission, —" Gunther also hesitated, it was long since he had said this word; — "I thank your Majesty for this gracious interest in me and my family."

The congratulations on Bronnen's engagement were a good introduction to the new footing on which the king and Gunther met. Nevertheless it was followed by a pause, in which the two men contemplated each other, as if after their four years' separation, they must again impress the memory with the features, which each had seen almost daily for many years. Gunther was but little altered, only he now wore a thick short snow-white beard; the king, on the other hand, had become stouter in figure; and on his countenance there now lay an expression of severe earnestness, which nevertheless harmonized well with his winning

amiability; his movements seemed even more elastic than before.

"I hear," began the king again, "that you are engaged in a great philosophical work, in which we may congratulate ourselves that we enjoy more generally the fruits of your mind, which we are now deprived of in daily intercourse."

"Your Majesty, I am, as it were, striking the balance of my life. It is on the one side less and on the other side more than I dared to hope; I live within myself, but I rejoice when looking out into the contemporary world, that I can perceive that those called to greater things, can purely balance their account."

"Growth is slow," said the king. "When I was driving through the fields yesterday, I thought how long such a blade requires till it comes to ear, we do not see the growth of each separate day, but the result will show it."

Smiling, and now with perfect unconstraint, he continued: "I disclose to you here my latest observations, it seems . . . it seems . . . as if I had only conversed with you yesterday. Come with me into the garden."

On the way the king asked: "How do you find the prince?"

"He is well formed, and, so far as I can judge, his mental development is fine and perfect."

The conversation was constantly broken off, and fresh topics were sought for; this was the result of a long separation and an uncleared up restraint between them.

"You have now lived much among the people," said

the king, "do you find that the simple popular mind is called to be a corrective for the errors of higher culture?"

The physician looked amazed at the king. What did this question mean? Was it put in mere idleness? Did the king still feel the same unconquered opposition to the decisions of the people? or did he mean by this to show a mark of his favour to an injured man, by giving him an opportunity of speaking out his views, and flattering himself in the consideration of them?

These thoughts passed quickly as lightning through Gunther's mind. He replied after a short pause:

"Will your Majesty allow me, before I proceed to answer the question, to define more exactly what the character of it is?"

"Pray do so."

Both men composed themselves in a different state of feeling. There was again a pause, just as if there were instruments within, to try and to tune, because coming out of dissimilar temperatures, they required to be brought into harmony.

"If we therefore," pursued Gunther, "understand by the expression, *popular mind*, those views and tones of feeling, which are not produced by what has been transmitted to us of a scientific and artistic character, but which exist intact as a power of nature, and if on the other hand by the expression, *a corrective of the higher culture*, we conceive a repelling of alien matter forced upon us, or even of that which is legitimately regarded as faded and corrupted, and hence, a power leading us back to the fundamental principles of nature, then I think I shall be able to answer this question according to the measure of my knowledge."

"I gladly accept this more precise arrangement of

the question," replied the king. "I find that one often waits in vain for a satisfying answer, and fatigues oneself fruitlessly, because the character of the question has been vague and undefined."

Gunther nodded, smiling.

"Now then, your answer," asked the king, regarding him with extreme attention.

"Your Majesty," began Gunther with vigour, "I may be apparently wandering from the subject, but I shall soon return to the point of your Majesty's question. This question arises out of a great event, marking the turning-point in the history of man. In contrast to all previous history of the human race, the central figure here, idealised by modern generations, and round which they have raised themselves, came forth from no olympic height, Jesus was born in a manger, and the kings of the world paid their homage of adoration to him. It is a symbol of the high in the low, it is a token of pure democracy, that in the manger among domestic animals, there shone resplendent that which is innate in the pure man. But it would be a perversion of the pure idea, and a new orthodoxy, if henceforth the manger alone were to be conceived as holy, and if the lower forms and surroundings of popular life, were alone regarded as possessing the indwelling of the eternal spirit. It must be so, — the pure spirit appears everywhere, in the manger among the beasts, as well as in the pillared temple, in the well-filled library of the scholar, and in the glittering palace on the royal throne; Buddha was a king's son, and was one of the great renovating benefactors of mankind, who proclaimed the equal rights of all men in the realm of mind.

"I will now turn back, and revert to the question. As often as any civilization reaches its highest stage of development, and its weaknesses appear, the idea of a complete revolution arises, passing always into an extreme; one believes oneself obliged to begin from the beginning, while the only point in question is to bring about a regeneration through strata yet uninjured, which come forward with fresh powers. This regeneration from the lower strata of the people cannot however be made alone from the lower strata, they are only ever sending forth fresh powers. The masses as such, can only yield new material, but as masses they cannot revive culture. — The people is only in a very partial sense the vehicle of the popular mind; individual men may step up from the people, who from their origin have preserved within them something of everlasting childhood, whether it be from the people from whom they sprung or from the life of nature which they led, or from their unwatched and unguided early growth. But with this childhood the spirit of knowledge must unite, and an epoch or a single man forms a new germinating point, in which the continuous growth is not broken off but newly grafted, in a certain measure newly rooted, forming a new soil on the old stem. Not the people as a mass, but the man or the circle, which concentrates within itself the popular mind, renews the same individually."

"Is not that Aristocracy?" inquired the king, in a soft and almost timid voice.

"Your Majesty, I shun no word, and no idea, which present themselves as the results of logical sequence. I will call it aristocracy if you will; but it is the eternally democratic principle; for the cultivators

of the popular mind, do not proceed out of the same sphere."

"I understand," said the king, pausing by a standard rose, "it is just the same as here, there are every year new shoots on the stem which bear roses. But excuse me — I have interrupted you."

"I will only add," resumed Gunther, "that the masses, as such, are vehicles of culture, but that the higher direction of this culture belongs to a few who are called and selected for it. Or still more exactly: he who has the average physical proportions of his race, is not tall; and so too, he who has general culture, possesses that which is general, but nothing distinguishing, or freeing, or elevating."

"But who measures, defines, and authorizes this distinction?" asked the king.

"In art and science, the individual call, the individual impulse, out of which that is found in a character, which the mass had falteringly and uncertainly within itself, and which just because it had it within itself, it can now, when outwardly given, call its own. In the state on the other hand, this call is decided by election, such as is only known in modern times to such an extent. It is advantageous in many ways, that an historically based call stands in opposition to the sudden calls by election. But when the former is not one with the present choice, it becomes overweaning, and is ruined."

The king walked along looking down on the ground. Everything always turned to prove that there was one united mind, which was more powerful and must be so, than any individual one. There must now be an end to any suspicion that this result could

have been arrived at by any idle or prejudiced questionings.

Long did the king walk by Gunther's side, but this time the conversation was not broken off on account of some unresolved discord jarring in the background of the soul. The king was rather thoughtful now, and he had learned and practised not to trifle away new information in conversation, but to arrange what he had received in his innermost mind.

"May I ask," began the king — there was something of profound humility in his tone — "may I ask, whether the views which you now lay before me, and which will furnish me with much food for thought, will be more fully stated in the work, with which you are now employed?"

"Certainly, your Majesty."

"Then allow me to pass at once to a question that concerns our small life and that portion of history, to which we belong."

The king crossed his arms on his breast, and continued:

"Let me speak freely with you. You have declined the position of minister of the ecclesiastical affairs and public instruction, offered you by our prime minister, Bronnen; I can well imagine that you would not sacrifice your pursuit of learning for office work. Would you perhaps prefer it — excuse me" — said the king, and he laughed naturally, "excuse me, for having made use of your constant expression, I did so quite unawares, — I would offer you the post of president of the academy?"

"I beg your Majesty most humbly not to regard me as ungrateful, but I am resolved not again to enter the stirring world. Moreover my long practical calling

— your Majesty knows I waive all formal modesty, and this is my sincere acknowledgment — has kept me so aloof from the strict pursuit of knowledge, that I could not maintain the rank so graciously awarded me. I beg your Majesty to permit me to spend in retirement the time still allotted to me to live. Your Majesty, I have become an author and I wish to remain so.”

“I should esteem myself happy in allowing you perfect liberty to express your sentiments regardless of any one.”

“I know that, your Majesty, and yet, I will at once make use of this regardlessness and will say: permitted freedom is not entire freedom. In any high position in the state, I must attend to the wishes of your Majesty, and I must also have in view the establishment which my son now superintends. Your Majesty must allow me to be an author, and to remain one and nothing else.”

A look of annoyance passed over the king's face. He had done his utmost, he had shewn this man by his actions, how gladly he would compensate for his previous overhasty step; and now here again was the stubbornness he had so often felt. Could the man possibly desire that the king should say: I repent, pardon me?

A sharp reply rose to the king's lips; but he repressed it. Gunther quickly saw what was passing, and esteem for the new man who was now standing before him, made his eye brighten.

The king had not yet mentioned the queen's name; he had not even, as would have been so natural, asked the physician of years' standing, what he thought of

the queen's appearance. Gunther was just on the point of mentioning the queen, when the king, contracting his brows, asked:

"Have you ever in your life committed an act which you had to repent of?"

"Your Majesty — my name is William Gunther, I have surmounted a difficult path in life and have often stumbled; I have been young and have grown old, and I have seen how each man is awarded what he in truth deserves."

"And have you proved that in your own case?"

"Yes, your Majesty. I thank you for having asked me. And so, permit me to confess — what I say, has not the remotest tinge of bitterness, when I perceive a fact as such. I deal with it, I speak therefore without embarrassment, as though I were explaining the laws of some event in nature. Yes, your Majesty, what has happened to me, has happened to me in perfect justice. I was in the most gracious manner dismissed in disgrace by your Majesty, my just due has befallen me."

"I did not desire this, I had no wish to allude to this. On the contrary —"

"Permit me, your Majesty, to point out the logical line of justice according to my free conviction. I mistook my duty in a deeply painful circumstance, both as a man, and as the friend and servant of your Majesty."

"You?" asked the king.

"Yes, I. That I desired the good, is no excuse for me. To be good is our inclination, to be wise is our equally legitimate vocation. I endeavoured at that time to lead her Majesty the queen to a height, from which

the small occurrences of life should seem small and trifling. It was a grievous error. I ought to have avoided any interference, or have endeavoured to mediate in the impending conflict. You did right in removing me, and you conferred a benefit on the queen also. Isolated from every influence, even from that of a friend, she was obliged to find support in herself, and she has found it."

A tear glistened in the king's eye. He laid his left hand on his breast — it seemed as if a thought, a word, were on the point of utterance, and that he did not like to declare it.

"I am happy," he said at length, "in having met on my path of life two such men as you and Bronnen. What we are, we are only partly from ourselves, we are so — consciously or unconsciously, — essentially from the society of those, in whose atmosphere we live."

He pressed the hand of Gunther, who drew a deep breath of satisfaction. He felt that the heroic self-glory of the king was completely conquered — the king's confession was a sure token of it.

"Papa!" called a boy's voice from the terrace, sounding clearly in the early mountain air, "Papa!"

The two men turned round. The queen was sitting on the terrace, surrounded by the ladies and gentlemen of her court. She had been anxiously watching them as they walked up and down, often pausing in earnest conversation. What could they be talking of? Were these bright days to be again disturbed by the old, never-forgotten offence?

When the king now pressed Gunther's hand and

held it long, the queen suddenly rose, then clasping the prince, and kissing him, she lifted him up, and said:

“Call, Papa!”

The two men turned round, and came upon the terrace, and the lofty mountains around looked less beautiful and refreshing than the calm and beaming countenances of the king and Gunther.

The king kissed his consort's hand, and she pressed it, for the first time for years, to his lips.

When Gunther took his leave, the king said:

“Commend me to your wife. I shall pay her a visit to-day before dinner.”

Frau Gunther was amazed when her husband informed her that the king was also coming. In spite of every explanation, she could not conceive that her husband could have thus forgiven and forgotten the injury inflicted on him — for as such she still felt impelled to regard the dismissal from office, even though it were none to her husband — for the first time in her life she did not suffer herself to be brought by his influence to another conviction. She saw in Gunther's pardoning disposition, a submissiveness which was only possible in a monarchical state; and her old republican feeling revived again.

The king and queen came.

The king met with a reserved reception from Frau Gunther. He could not know that she was still regarding him with suppressed wrath. Was that the man, and could such a one exist, who could honour and dishonour Gunther?

Standing by the stream in the garden, the king said to Gunther:

"I hear the nurse of the crown prince is here in the neighbourhood. Will you not send for her to come here?"

"Her Majesty the queen does not wish to see her," replied Gunther.

"Do you know the reason?"

"It lies in the echo of that sad remembrance," replied the physician — and this was the only passing allusion to Irma, which was uttered. In the short pause, which followed these words, the stream murmured by more vehemently, as though it had somewhat to say.

On the second evening after the king's arrival, Bronnen appeared accompanied by the superintendent; and he found the whole social circle in happiness and order.

The pleasure of country life was especially enhanced by a certain retention of form; the enjoyment of freedom was daily felt, and yet there was at the same time a kind of fostering protection, formed on every excursion and expedition by the accompanying court circle and attendants. For wherever they fixed their resting place in the free nature round them, and wherever the little prince lighted a fire for his amusement in the forest, a numerous body of servants were always present, forming a ring, to keep off intruding strangers.

Paula's manner in society was full of perfect composure; her movements shewed power and elegance; she neither obtruded herself nor did she hide herself; the feeling of being in her own house gave an agreeable certainty to her whole demeanour.

Gunther's blind nephew, now acknowledged as chamber performer to the queen, played during the even-

ing in a masterly manner. On the following morning he took his first leave of absence, in order, as he said smilingly, to look about the neighbourhood and to visit old acquaintances.

The king prepared himself for the chase.

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER.

It was morning. Gundel was speaking with her father, and saying how strange cousin Irmgard was; it was too much for her to speak a word, she tasted scarcely anything but some fresh milk from the cow, and this lying for hours out there on the projecting point of the mountain, from which a glimpse was caught of the distant lake, was so very strange. The little pitch-man too found Irma's behaviour extremely mysterious; for some time she had entirely given up work, and had also not gone with him to gather herbs.

"I should like some day to ask the great doctor down there, him for whose establishment I fetch the herbs, what I ought to do," said he. "But our mistress has forbidden it, and then again I don't rightly see that there is anything amiss in our Irmgard. I have before now thought of doing something, but then I don't know whether that's of any use with a human being; when an animal's sick, out there in the open air, one cuts the turf it lies on, and turns it over, and then it gets well again. I should only like to know whether that helps in a human being too."

"Oh! father!" replied Gundel. "That's the terrible part! I am afraid they'll soon turn up the turf upon our good Irmgard, and she is so good, only when one

speaks to her, it seems as if she were obliged to consider the words which she hears and which she's got to say."

Thus they both talked together and each went to the work of the day, while Irma lay without on her blue rug, sometimes looking out into the wide world, and sometimes closing her eyes, and thinking and dreaming within herself. Her life was one of mute calmness, as if she were linked with the animate and inanimate nature around her, as if she had for ever wandered here, and would for ever wander here, a child of man to whom naught was strange, no flower, no tree, no beast dwelling on the earth, nor bird soaring in the air; the mountains, the clouds, the bright day, the starry night, all were dear and familiar with her.

Irma was now lying as was her wont, on the mossy mountain slope. She gazed far into the distance, and again her eye would turn to the ground to watch the life stirring amongst the blades and mosses; involuntarily she would now and then raise with her finger the fir-tuft covering, formed by the needle leaves that had accumulated for years and years, and below it the débris of plants that seemed to have been decaying there since the world began — no human eye had before penetrated so far; her's was the first that had rested on it.

The cows often came to Irma, and grazed round her, but they disturbed her not; Irma heard their breathing near her, and remained lying quiet; now and then the leading cow would stand before her looking also into the distant landscape, with head upraised; then she would go on feeding, holding at times the half-eaten fodder in her mouth, and seeming to forget

that she had wished for food, and looking at the form prostrate there.

A wonderful life of bright waking, and veiled dreaming, opened upon Irma, the more she rested the more longing for rest overcame her, an indescribable weariness appeared to have come upon her, weariness of work and thought, such as she had never known during all the years of her social life. She often tried to rouse herself but she could not, and there was something peculiarly agreeable in the feeling of this weary resting on the ground. Hundreds of songs and whole pieces of music would pass through her mind, and a thousand thoughts would rise and pass away, away with the light breath of air, — nothing was to be retained.

It was hot midday. The sun was burning with a fervent glow, there was not a breath stirring even here upon the heights; the cows lay in the shade of the trees. Irma had gone out alone. The little pitch-man was in the town delivering his herbs. Irma walked further and further; she came to the source of the brook, and sat there by the broad basin into which the waters fell; the trees towered above, casting dark shadows on the water. Irma bent forward and saw her image reflected, she saw it for the first time for many years, and she smiled. Not a breath of air stirred, not a sound was heard, everything slumbered in the bright, hot, midday.

For one moment Irma looked round, then she undressed herself quickly, and swam in the water and dived under and rose again, and an unforeboded feeling of delight came over her. Only the sun which shone

between the branches saw for a moment the wonderful form.

Again all was still, Irma had dressed herself; she lay dreaming on the edge of the wood and sweet melodies passed through her mind.

Presently she heard her name called loudly and repeatedly. She answered with all her strength, and at last Gundel came and said:

"Irmgard, come directly into the hut, there is a gentleman there with a servant, he wishes to speak with you."

Irma, who had partly raised herself, lay down again. She felt a pang at her heart. What could it be? Was the time fulfilled, and must she once more go forth into the turmoil of the world?

She rose up, and asked:

"Do you not know who it is?"

"No, but he says he passed a night with us some years ago. He is a tall handsome young man, but he is unfortunately stone blind."

"Does the blind man travel?" thought she, and went hastily with Gundel towards the hut.

"Good day," cried she, while still some distance off.

"Yes, that is your voice," said the blind man, stretching out his arms, and opening and shutting his hands; "come, come nearer, give me your hand." He quickly drew off his gloves, and his face wore at the same time a strange expression.

Irma approached, and took the delicate white hand that was offered.

"Your hand trembles," he cried. "You are not startled because you see me blind?"

Irma could not answer, she nodded as if the blind could see the movement.

The sun-beams shone in the face of the poor man, and his sightless eye stared at them.

"You are grown much thinner;" said the blind man, "will you allow me to pass my hand over your face?"

"Yes," replied Irma, closing her eyes.

"You are no longer so beautiful as you were two years ago, your eyelids are hot and heavy, you must have pined away a good deal. Can I perhaps help you? I am not rich, but I can still do something."

"Thank you, I have learned to help myself."

Irma said this in pure language, involuntarily without a trace of dialect; being accosted in high German, called forth a similar reply.

The stranger started, turned his head right and left, and stretched out his neck so far, that it was almost strange to look at.

Irma led him by the hand to the seat in front of the hut. She felt inclined to tremble as she held his soft and refined hand, but she made herself strong; she sat down by the blind man, and asked how it was that he came there.

"You remember," said the blind man, "that at the time I was with you, I knew my fate; I have long struggled with myself and have learned to bear it; just as we know that we must die, and are cheerful about it, I knew that my sight must decay and I became cheerful."

Irma drew a deep breath.

"Do you understand what I mean?" asked the blind man.

"Yes, indeed, go on speaking, I like to hear your voice."

"I knew that, and that is why I am come to you. I was at the farm down below; they were all at the harvest, but the childrens' maid told me that you were up here, and so I came to you. I have been a good part of the way here once before, in the storm that time, and wherever I now go I feel anew the delight I once drew in with my eyes. What I told you then I desired, is become true. I have all the splendid views within my mind, I see the sunlight sparkle, the stream rushing over the rocks, the lake calmly glittering, and the trees standing side by side in the peacefulness of the forest. I have always told my guide, now we are here and now there; he was quite beside himself that I knew it all so. But the best of all is that I have beautiful human images within my mind, and I had an especial desire to see you again; I say see, and yet I mean, to hear you speak, but I see you when you speak."

Irma replied that she understood him fully and felt with him, and when she explained to him the difficulty of walking, how the groping foot has always first to feel loosely for the ground, before the muscles are straitened to take a step, the blind man asked with surprise, — and again there was something frightful in the way in which he stretched out his head and bent back, with an air of intent eagerness:

"And how do you know that?"

"I know a blind man who told me it. It is terrible to me to think that you must so depend upon a stranger,

and say to him as the blind Gloster prays his guide, 'set me where you stand!'"

"Maiden, who are you? Is it you who have spoken thus? It was your voice — or is any one else with you? How do you know?"

"I have read it once" — said Irma, and she bit her lips, till the blood almost came. "I have read it once," she repeated, returning with an effort back to dialect.

The blind man sat bent low, holding his hands between his knees; a convulsive movement passed over his fine youthful features, as though tears were struggling to come forth. He laid his head back against the wall, and said at length:

"Then you can read, and so intelligently? could you — no, I will not ask you."

"Ask me what you will. I have a hearty interest in you and have thought much of you."

"Have you? You too?" he exclaimed hastily, moving his head again so strangely to and fro. "Maiden," he continued, "give me your hand again, say: could you give it to me, and let your eyes be mine?" —

"Good sir," broke in Irma, "I should like you to have come up here with happiness and to go down again with happiness. I feel as if I must tell you everything, and so I must. I see you now for the second time in my life" —

"And I have seen you only once, and I see you always," said the blind man.

"Come away from here, I will lead you: I will tell you alone everything, and will thus show you how I thank you for being so good to me."

"From here, we ought to catch a glimpse of the

lake on the other side of the mountains," said the blind man, "can you not lead me there?"

"Certainly," replied Irma, almost startled at this wonderful inner life, and she led the blind man across the meadow to the mountain declivity.

"Sit down here," said she, "and I will sit by your side. What I now communicate to you, is only for you; only for you, is it not?"

The blind man stretched out his hand, and cried: "I swear it!"

"You need no oath," replied Irma. "Well, know then, I am an unknown child of the world, a child out of the fashionable world. Ask not my name. The brightest splendour of life was mine, but I went into obscurity. I was a base worldling. I was so lost that I sought self-destruction. If it were possible, I should like to float with you, as with a brother, down from this height into the golden evening glow, like those birds in the air, and vanish into infinity. But I have learned that life is a duty, and all which we are and possess, we only are and we only possess when we find the world within us, and ourselves within the world. Just as you have the world around us within you, and no one can take it from you; so do we alone possess everything when we have it within us, and death takes nothing from us, it only gives us back again to the world —"

"Maiden!" cried the blind man suddenly — "Maiden, what are you doing? Who are you? No mortal being speaks thus. Must I now grow superstitious? Must I now believe in angels? Is any one with you? Who is with you? Who are you? Give me your hand!"

"Be calm; it is I!" said Irma, extending her hand

to him, which he covered with his kisses. She withdrew her hand, and passed it over his face, saying:

"Be calm, I have only had a glimpse of the world, like you; and up here we sit, here forgotten by the world, two poor children of the world, you and I, and we are still happy, for we are one with eternity. Be happy, and let your spirit rise high above everything into the boundless sphere of music! Here is my hand again. Come, I will lead you!"

Irma led the blind man to the hut. He spoke not a word. On reaching the hut, he called for his servant and guide in a somewhat imperious tone.

"Are you going away so quickly?" asked Irma.

The blind man gave no answer; supported on his servant he left the hut.

Irma held out her hand to him once again, and said nothing but the words: "The world within us, and we within the world."

The blind man only nodded; his features were convulsed again, as though he were restraining a flood of tears.

When the blind man had nearly reached the edge of the forest, he called out once again to Irma:

"Maiden, come here; I have something else to say to you."

Irma went to him, and he said:

"I am the nephew of Dr. Gunther, who was formerly physician to the king, and who now lives a few hours from here in the little town in the valley. I am staying with him, and I am chamber performer to the queen, and if you ever need any one, send to me or my uncle; he will help you. But rely upon it, I will speak to no one of you."

The blind man hastily turned away, and went down the mountain, leaning on his servant.

Irma stood and looked after him.

Did Gunther live? and here in her very neighbourhood?

And now a human being was carrying away the half-veiled secret of her existence . . .

The blind man disappeared in the forest; and Irma, with her eyes fixed on the ground, went back to her resting-place. There she sat till night approached, looking out into the distance.

A strange cloud stood in the north, grey with burnished white edges; it stood fixed like a wall, and then, as if the earth were sending forth a giant breath, a storm wind rose, bending the trees with its overwhelming might.

She hurried to the hut; the little pitch-man had returned.

"There'll be a storm to-night, I fear," said he. "There's no moon in the sky, she don't rise till late, and that brings the thunder."

He went out again to drive in the cows; the boy had gone after the goats, which had strayed far away.

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER.

"THAT is a wind," cried Gundel, sitting down breathless in the hut. It had required all her strength to close the door. "That is a wind! I never remember such a one; it blows upon one as if it came out of a baker's oven."

She rose again quickly, took a scoop of water,

and sprinkled it on the fire that was burning on the hearth.

"What are you doing?" cried Irma.

"We must have no fire now," replied Gundel; and they both sat in the hut in smoke and darkness. They almost felt stifled, and yet they could not open a window on account of the violent wind.

"If only father were not out!" lamented Gundel.

"For God's sake, father!"

Gundel's last word was drowned in a clap of thunder which suddenly broke over them, and reverberated from the mountains, sounding as if the whole world were broken to pieces with that one peal. And then again the wind raged and stormed. The firmly-built hut tottered, the roof seemed to tremble, and one of the great blocks of stone, with which it was secured, rolled and rumbled down.

"Give me your hand," cried Gundel in the darkness; "if we must die — let us pray." She prayed loud in the gloom and smoke, but the thunder drowned the words. Suddenly the noise changed, and there was a sound as if countless iron hammers were playing upon the roof; there seemed a turmoil and confusion of rumbling, tumbling, and rattling.

"That is a hailstorm," whispered Gundel to Irma.

It thundered and hailed, and pale flashes of lightning shot through the smoke-filled hut, so that the two girls seemed to each other as though they were transported into the infernal abodes. As if impelling each other, the hailstones fell, now apparently thrown with convulsive strength, now seeming to pause into an equal steady fall, as if the raging demon of the mountain wanted to breathe, that he might again give full

vent to his fury that man had ventured to build a hut on his heights.

Through the rattling of the hail, they heard the cows lowing without, and the ringing of their bells.

"I opened the stable-door, but the wind must have driven it to again," cried Gundel; and, forgetting her own trembling misery, she hastened out. She came quickly back, seized a tub, inverted it over her head, and again left the hut. Irma followed her, and they both bent down as the great hailstones beat rattlingly on the tub. Gundel tried to open the stable-door, but the cows crowded round her, so that she was thrown down; in the midst of the clattering of the hail, Irma heard Gundel's piercing cry; the leader cow, known by its bell, stood by Irma, and lowed tremblingly.

"Come," said Irma, seizing the leader cow by the horn; it followed her, and the other cows made way. Irma found Gundel and helped her up, and both opened the stable-door, almost crushed by the cows, which all wanted to go in at once, and having only one hand free, for the other was holding the tub over head; at length they succeeded in getting up to the wall, all the cows were in the stalls, and the two girls waded through the hail now lying deep on the ground back again to the hut. They groped for the hearth, and sat down on it. There they sat in the dark, two solitary forsaken children, and the wild storm raged without.

"I have a belief," cried Gundel, "that father has found somewhere a place to creep under; he knows every overhanging rock, and — oh God!" she cried suddenly, still louder, "Oh God! that poor blind man

out there! Have you also pains on your hand and back," asked she, crouching up to Irma, and crying.

"No, I feel nothing," replied Irma; and in truth it seemed as if no bodily pain could affect her. She too had thought of the blind man, and from time to time the image of that king turned out by the ingratitude of his child into the stormy night arose before her; and not more wildly did the wind and storm rage without, than did the thought in Irma's mind, that she, overcome by pity, had allowed a man's hand to pass over her face.

Was all again lost? all that had been so hardly obtained? This was the secret lamentation within her; and yet she knew herself so pure.

"Thank God, it only rains now!" said Gundel at last. She made a light; and, as if they had both come out of the depths of darkness, they looked at each other. The floor of the room was full of the wet which had run off her clothes.

"Are you at home?" cried a voice outside. The door was opened, and the little pitch-man entered. He was carrying a young kid in his arms.

"Thank God that you are safe and sound!" cried he; laying the little kid on the edge of the fireless hearth; then he wiped his forehead and eyes with his sleeve, which was wetter than either. He fetched a bottle of gentian brandy from the upper shelf and drank; Irma and Gundel too were obliged to drink, and this done, he began to tell his story:

"I have," said he, "had my share of things, but never such as this. I know every tree and every stone for hours distant, but I was like a lost thing; and as I stood there in the midst of the thunderstorm and hail,

I heard a doe-chamois bleating pitifully, and I went towards her and there she stood with a young one at her foot; and the poor little kid only just come into the world was nigh to be beat to death by the hail. The mother ran away when she saw me, and came again and placed herself over her young, so that the hail only struck her and not her kid. I came nearer, and then the chamois ran again away. I took up the young one, and just as we were going on to look for some place to creep under, I heard human voices, and one calling, and another calling, they were calling to a third, who was roaring and screaming; and presently in the lightning I saw that he was lying on the ground and would not go on.

“‘Honoured sir, only lean upon us, we will find some shelter,’ they called; and as it lightened again I saw that we were not far from the witches’-table, and I called out to them, ‘Yonder is the witches’-table!’ Then it lightened again, and I saw that the two men who had been standing upright had also fallen down. They told me afterwards that they were afeared of me, and I don’t take it amiss in any one; in such a storm, and in such a night, one can believe anything. So I went up to them and told them who I was, and that I would guide them, and we got safely—it was pretty difficult though, the blind man was also somewhat queer, and kept calling for a lost child—we got safe and sound, though as if we had been taken out of the water, under the witches’-table; and there we lay, and saw how it kept lightning, and how the hailstones danced on the rocks and battled with the trees. We waited till the rain came, and the blind man told me that when I next went to the apothecary’s in the town

he would give me a piece of gold, and the king is now there and the queen too, and he will manage that I shall get the medal for saving life, and a pension to the end of my days. Now children, get to bed, for you are soaking wet. What's the matter with you, Irmgard? Why do you tremble so?"

The little pitch-man now scolded Gundel for having let cousin Irmgard sit so long in her wet clothes; and now and then the little kid cried piteously and also trembled all over, so that he fetched his bed-covering from the hay-loft, and wrapped the little creature in it; then with great skill he fed it with his three fingers with some milk out of a dish.

The little kid slept, and in the room within Irma slept also.

"Thank God, you have had a good sleep," said Gundel, as she went to Irma's bed late in the morning; "and it's just like a miracle, the hail has done nothing at all to you, and see how I look." She showed the marks it had left, but then quickly continued: "That's no matter, that'll soon pass over. And now look at the sky, doesn't it seem as if it could never do any harm? Yonder by the stream the lightning has struck a tree and rent it quite asunder, and there where it used to be as dry as an oven, there are nothing but rivulets. If one didn't feel it in all one's limbs and see it outside, one would never believe at all that there had been a storm; but we are fortunate, for there isn't a single head of cattle come to harm, and the herdboy is also there, he crept down below in the valley, and there was nothing of it there."

It was a clear, fresh morning. There still lay some large hailstones in various clefts, the cows were cheer-

ful on the pasture, and the herdboy sang and called among the mountains; he was proud that the goats understood the weather best; they had grazed towards the valley, and that was the surest token that a storm was coming.

At noon, Franz came up from the freehold farm, from the wild torrents of water that had come down into the valley, they had conjectured that something had occurred above, and Walpurga had sent Franz up for certain tidings. The hot midday sun had quickly dried up every thing, and the water did not long remain on the heights. Irma went with her blue rug to her favourite place, spread the covering on the ground, and lay down.

The bugle-horn resounded. What was it? Was it a reality or a dream?

The bugle-horn was repeated, and Irma's heart beat quickly. Something was approaching, she heard the panting of pursuit, and branches cracking; Irma looked up through the opening of the forest before her. Close to her a stag ran past, followed by horsemen coming nearer and nearer. Irma drew her hand across her eyes — she looked again — she saw plainly: it was the king and his suite. —

The head huntsman sprang from his horse, and called out: "Here, your Majesty, here the animal broke through, here are the fresh marks."

He dipped his finger into the blood, and showed it to the king. The king looked round. — Did he feel the glance long extinguished for him, and once so bliss-bestowing, which was now directed upon him from the forest thicket? He missed his stirrup, the horse reared wildly, Irma bent down with her face in

the moss; she felt as if the whole chase, as if all the horses' hoofs were passing over her — she bit the herbage on which she lay — she dug with her hands into the earth — she feared to scream aloud. — —

When she rose again, all was still. She stared round her. Had the apparition been only a dream? She heard the report of a gun, the sound of a bugle in the distance. The stag was down.

Could she but thus die also! was the thought that passed through Irma's mind. She sank back again on the moss, and wept.

She rose. A dark cloud, big with storm, had arisen once again within her. It was for the last time. All was again clear and sunny around and within, hail and storm and lightning forgotten. She turned back towards the hut, looking often up to the sun, which was beginning to decline. Now for the first time, she repaired to rest, before it was night. She was shivering with the cold of fever, and then again her cheeks became burning hot and red; she called the little pitch-man to her bed and asked him to give her a sheet of paper; her hand trembled, as she wrote in pencil:

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

She begged the little pitch-man to hasten into the town to the great doctor, to give the paper to him alone, and to accompany him here directly. Then she turned away and was calm.

"I'll give you something good," said the little pitch-man, as he stood before her with his large broad-brimmed hat on his head and his mountain staff in his hand. "You'll see, it'll do you good. I'll lay the little kid down here at your feet, that'll be good for you both. Shall I?"

Irma nodded.

The little pitch-man did, as he had said. The kid looked up sleepily at Irma, and she smiled at it in return. Both soon closed their eyes.

The little pitch-man wandered away in the night down into the valley.

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER.

It had rained in the valley almost unceasingly throughout the whole day. The storm which had burst over the mountains in hail and thunder, had turned in the low lands to rain, through which were caught occasional glimpses of blue sky, giving intimation that it was fine weather above.

Towards evening the sky completely cleared. The queen, with the ladies of the court, a circle to which now Frau Gunther and Paula belonged, were sitting in the large music-hall, the doors of which were open. Paula had been singing to the queen for the first time. She was embarrassed, and Frau Gunther requested that no more might be demanded of her daughter for that day.

Between the queen and Frau Gunther, a peculiar relation had formed itself. The queen delighted in her straight-forward and solid nature, but still it was with difficulty that she accustomed herself to meet such perfect independence, indeed she was even tempted to regard this independence as littleness, for on the day on which Frau Gunther had received the breastpin, she had said to the queen: "Your Majesty, it won't do, unless you receive a present in return from me," —

and she had presented the queen with a handsomely bound book, upon the slavery question and upon the history of slavery in general, written by her brother who resided as a physician in America. The queen had accepted the book with thanks, and Frau Gunther felt herself now more free, although it often gave her trouble to translate, as it were, to a certain measure all she wished to say, and to clothe it in the universally prescribed court costume, for she took a sort of pride in not infringing upon any forms.

The queen inquired why the elder daughter, the widow of the professor, withdrew herself so much; Frau Gunther replied that just now as Bronnen and her nephew were visiting them, and there was a good deal altogether to superintend in the house, Cornelia had gladly undertaken these duties. The queen heard it ever anew like tidings from some strange world, that the preparation of the daily necessities of life demanded especial attention and could not be settled of itself.

The spirits of all were affected by the state of the weather. The electricity in the atmosphere, which had discharged itself on the heights, still partially floated in the air of the valley. In a country residence, and especially here in the little dairy farm, where there were many comforts missing, and there was small space for dispersing and for diversion of thought, the interruption caused by the bad weather was all the more striking and obstructive.

All the greater delight was felt in the anticipation of the morrow, which according to every indication promised to be a bright day.

It was agreed, that they should all meet for dinner

on the following day, in the neighbourhood of the second waterfall, formed by the stream among the mountains, and that the king should join them there, from the chase.

The king was engaged with Bronnen in cabinet matters, the new telegraph carrying now many messages to and fro; Gunther, the superintendent, Sixtus, and several gentlemen were walking, and smoking in the avenue and the drops that still fell from the trees were glittering in the evening light.

The ladies in the music-hall asserted that to-day that alpine glow was to be seen, which they naturally expected to see daily, though it is an extremely rare phenomenon.

The night had come on, and the king was sitting with Gunther and two of the gentlemen in waiting at the card-table.

Presently Gunther was informed by a servant that there was a man waiting outside, who wished to speak to him for a moment. Gunther gave up his cards to the care of the ever-obliging superintendent, and went out; and there, leaning on his great alpine stick, with his broad and much-crumpled hat in his hand, and his rug thrown over him, stood the little pitch-man. He held his left hand in his pocket, and when Gunther approached, he said:

"Here's a note for you."

Gunther read, and rubbed his eyes, and passed his hand across his face, as if he must awake to understand it.

"Who has sent you?" he asked.

"It'll stand in there — our Irmgard."

Gunther looked round alarmed when he heard the

name uttered, here before the very door, and within sat the king, the queen

He went again to the lamp burning in the corridor, and read the paper repeatedly; there it stood:

"Eberhard's daughter sends for Gunther."

The man, who had always justly boasted of his calm composure, was obliged to support himself by the balusters, and for a time could not utter a word. He looked round, and the eye of the little pitch-man met his own.

"Who are you?" he asked at length.

"I'm from the farm, Walpurga is my sister's child —"

"Well, go outside and wait for me, I will come directly."

The little pitch-man went, and Gunther mustered all his strength to go back again into the card-room to take his leave, and to say that he had been summoned to some one seriously ill; he knew not how to bring it out with a calm voice before all those whom it so nearly concerned, but he hoped to succeed in doing so.

Fortunately, Bronnen and his betrothed, who had been wandering in the garden in the quiet evening, just then appeared at the entrance door.

"Here," cried out Gunther to them. "Paula, send me out my hat, and you, dear Bronnen, make my excuses to their Majesties, I must go directly to see some one who is very ill. But I beg you to avoid all sensation on the matter, and Paula, do not tell your mother till you are going home; I shall not return this evening."

"Cannot Dr. Sixtus go?" asked Bronnen.

"No. But pray, ask me no more. Early to-morrow I shall be at home again, or if not, I shall appear at dinner by the waterfall."

The lovers went into the inner apartment, and a lacquey presently brought out Gunther's hat.

Gunther walked quickly away with the little pitch-man, only once he looked back at the brightly lighted windows of the dairy farm, and thought of those who were sitting carelessly within, foreboding nothing. How startled would they be at tidings which had affected him so powerfully! On his way to his house, he only spoke superficially to the little pitch-man; he wished to ask no particulars, for he could not know whether the messenger's answer might not express something, which, heard by some listener, might prematurely betray the secret, and he was still planning in his own mind, how it all was to be arranged and adjusted.

It was not till they approached his house, that Gunther asked:

"What ails the sick girl? What does she complain of?"

"She don't complain of anything, but she's got hot fever, and has coughed for a long time."

"Is she in her perfect senses?"

"Just the same as usual, quite herself, only in her sleep she now and then calls out, Victory! So Gundel says; that's my daughter —"

"Well, wait here," said Gunther on reaching his house, "I will send you down something to eat and drink, but don't tell any one who sent you here."

Cornelia was sitting by a solitary lamp, reading to her blind cousin. The blind man had only told of his alarm in the hail-storm; all that he had suffered in his

heart, he kept secret. He had slept almost the whole day and now he was again refreshed. Cornelia was startled when she saw her father, but he soon quieted her. His pocket medicine chest, and some well sealed cases of refreshing and strengthening nourishment were quickly ready, and were packed upon the mule. Gunther rode away, the little pitch-man walking by his side; his face was scarcely to be seen, for his broad brimmed hat had not yet recovered the storm of yesterday. It was not till the houses of the town lay behind them, that Gunther asked:

"How far is it to the sick girl?"

"Going on foot up the mountain, it takes three hours to do it, I have often done it in less time than that; but riding, it is a good hour further."

When they entered the wood, Gunther halted and said:

"Come nearer, so you are the uncle of Walpurga?"

"Aye, surely! her mother's own brother, and the only one too, for two others died young."

"What do you call the sick girl?"

"By her name — Irmgard."

"And how long has she been with you?"

"Ever since Hansei bought the farm. She came on with us then, from the lake. But she has been ill, they say she's a little crazed; I don't believe it though, she's got her right senses about her — rather too much than too little."

"And do you not know what her family name is?" asked Gunther.

"I've never asked after it." And then the little pitch-man loquaciously told the story of Irma's life,

and how for years she had worn a bandage on her forehead, and had never laid it aside till she had come to the mountain pasturage. The little pitch-man depicted Irmgard's whole life so touchingly, that Gunther stopped, held out his hand to the old man and said:

"You are a good fellow."

Uncle Peter consented to this, but asserted that there was no one so good as Irmgard in the whole world.

Rapid streams of water crossed their path, and the little pitch-man told of the storm of the evening before, how terrible it was, just as if the air had turned into stones and was hammering upon one, and how he had helped the blind man, and what he had promised him. He often took hold of the mule's bridle, and led it down some steep hollow, across a brook, and then again upwards.

"You must also have gone through a good deal, doctor," said the little pitch-man; he too would have liked to have been entertained by his companion on the long way, and sitting on his mule, he could have talked better than one walking by his side; he could feel by his chest that talking when going up hill, was not good for him. As if Gunther had guessed this, he alighted when they reached a level place, and made the little pitch-man mount. Uncle Peter made much ado, but at length gave way and got up; as soon however as they began to ascend again, he dismounted quickly and obliged Gunther again to ride.

"If our Irmgard wants to leave us now," said the little pitch-man, "I'd gladly give her up to you, doctor; she can play the zitter too right beautiful, and when

she's well again, there's not a thing she couldn't learn, nothing comes difficult to her. But I hope she'll stay with us, she's scared and doesn't like to go among people."

It was as if he had surmised Gunther's thoughts, for the latter was just absorbed in the idea, of how he could keep Irma concealed from the court, that he might afterwards take her to his own house; he saw her in imagination, sitting by his wife and Cornelia, another daughter filling Paula's place.

It was dark in the forest, and there were only stars glittering over-head.

"Midnight's over now," said the little pitch-man, as they reached the height of a projecting mountain. "Over yonder, the moon's coming up."

Gunther looked behind, and saw the half moon rising and looking like a fragment in the vast ether....

"There are some of our cows a'ready," said the little pitch-man, and his voice grew clearer, "that's the blackbird-cow! she's got the ding-dong bell, and strays always the furthest off, but it's no half hour now before we are at home."

Silently they went on, and at length they reached the hut. A glimmer of light shone through the round hole in the closed window-shutter.

Gunther alighted.

"I will go in first, and tell her that the gentleman is here," said the little pitch-man softly.

Gunther nodded assent.

He soon came out again and said:

"She is sleeping, but her cheeks are fiery red, and Gundel says, she has often called out in her dreams:

Father, and Victory! She must be dreaming good things."

Gunther went into the hut. He stood as if paralyzed when he saw Irma.

"What is that?" he asked the little pitch-man, as the kid at Irma's feet raised its head and stared at the stranger.

"It's a little chamois kid I found yesterday, and she liked it," replied the little pitch-man softly.

Gunther told Gundel and her father to leave the room, and he sat down silently beside the bed. He felt Irma's pulse and touched her forehead, and the little pitch-man lingered to ask, "how is it?"

Gunther shrugged his shoulders, and signed him to go out.

The little pitch-man hastened to the loft, awoke Franz and told him to go down quickly to his master and mistress, and to tell them to come up directly, for that Irmgard was very ill.

He laid himself down in the hay. He felt as if every limb were broken, he had never been so tired in his life before; but he found neither rest nor sleep, and he was soon up again in front of the hut, listening by the shuttered window.

Gunther sat meanwhile with the sick girl. She moved now and then, but she did not open her eyes, and the little kid at her feet slept also.

Gunther had taken the light out of the room, and sat in the darkness.

"It is day! I wish to see the day-light," cried Irma suddenly starting up.

A grey streak of dawn came through the opening in the shutter.

"I wish to see the day-light," cried Irma again, and the little pitch-man outside, opened the slightly closed shutter. A broad stream of light burst in. A radiant brightness passed over Irma's face, she stretched out both her hands to Gunther, he clasped them, and she kissed his with her feverish lips.

"You have achieved great things," said Gunther, "you have shewn a power which I admire. Hold it fast."

"I thank you. My father comes to me in you. Lay your hand upon my forehead."

"I hold my hand upon your forehead, and bless you in the spirit of your father, and with this kiss, I kiss away all that burdens you. You are free."

Irma lay quietly, and Gunther held his hand on her brow, and without, the rosy tint of morning spread higher and higher, and the light flooded the room with a golden glow.

Gunther went out and fetched Irma some strengthening medicine. She felt revived and refreshed.

"I know that I shall now die," she said, in a clear voice. "I am happy that I have lived in consciousness, and can die in consciousness."

She gave Gunther her journal, and said that the wish it contained respecting her place of burial, was not to be regarded; that the uncle knew where her favourite place had been, that there she wished to be buried, and that no monument should mark her grave.

Gunther had once said that he had held many a dying hand — he had never yet sat by a deathbed like Irma's.

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER.

"I knew it, I foreboded it!" cried Walpurga, when Franz brought the tidings to the farm, of Irma's heavy sickness. "I knew that she wouldn't come again," she repeated, weeping and wringing her hands, and kneeling down by the chair and pressing her head in fervency of prayer.

"That don't help now," said Hansei — laying his hand upon her shoulder, "get up, you are not generally so. Come, it won't be so bad; and if it be, now isn't the time for weeping and lamenting; now we'll do what is to be done."

"What can I do? What shall I do," said Walpurga, turning her tearful face to Hansei.

He helped her up, and said:

"Franz says there is a doctor up there, who has a medicine chest with him, and now let us have our meal, and then we'll go up."

"Oh! good heavens! I cannot go three paces; my knees feel as if they were useless."

"Well then, do you remain here and I'll go alone."

"You will leave me alone? and what am I to do then?"

"That I don't know; go to bed, perhaps you can sleep."

"I don't wish for any bed, I don't wish for any sleep. I don't wish for any thing. I will go too, and if I die on the way, I can't help it."

"Don't talk so. It's a sin against me and the children," were the words that rose to Hansei's lips,

but he made a quick movement with his hand as if to repress them; it was not necessary to utter them, when women begin to lament, they mingle with it pity for themselves, they don't know what they are saying.

Hansei brought his wife her better clothes, for she was so beside herself that she scarcely knew where any thing was, and how to put it on. Hansei shewed himself by no means an unskilful valet.

"Now you must yourself put on other shoes," he said at last.

Walpurga looked at him smiling amid her tears; she now began to perceive how faithfully and humbly he had helped her. With a bright voice she said:

"Yes, that I can! You have helped me so that I feel I can go."

Hansei had the meal brought in, and sat down to it quietly, after having placed ready by his side his mountain staff, hunter's bag, and hat. Walpurga too was obliged to sit at the table, but she ate little; Hansei however had the virtue of being able to eat heartily at any time. He fully satisfied himself, and his manner expressed that when one's body is well fortified by food, one is better able to meet any emergency, come what will.

At the conclusion, he cut himself a good hunch of bread, put it in his pocket and got up.

The children were consigned to the care of the upper servant, and a day labourer's wife was also charged to remain in the house. Hansei and his wife started on their journey.

They had already gone some distance, when Burgei

came running after her parents and crying out: "I want to go too! I want to go too to cousin Irmgard!"

There was no help for it; they were obliged to take the child with them, for they could not let her go back the whole distance alone, and neither of the parents wished to take her home.

"You're a naughty child, a very naughty child, and now I must carry you and you're too big for it," said Walpurga, taking up the child in her arms. Hansei nodded. It was as well that the child was there, for then his wife who was always in extremes, could not become so violent, if the worst occurred.

Walpurga, who had not imagined herself able to go alone, now carried the child and stepped quickly forwards.

"Let Burgei run alone now, and when she's tired, then I'll carry her," said Hansei.

So long as the path was wide enough, the child went between the parents, but when it grew narrow, they made her go in front. They got on but slowly on account of the child; Hansei took her in his arms, and she soon fell asleep.

Presently Walpurga began softly:

"I must tell you now, Hansei, you must hear from me now, who our Irmgard is."

"And I tell you again, I won't know it; she alone must tell me, if she lives, and if she's dead, you can tell me it as well afterwards."

"Dead!" cried Walpurga, "do you know more? Has Franz told you anything in secret?"

"Franz has told me nothing but what you have heard too."

"But why do you speak so of death?"

"Because any one who is very ill, may soon die. But be calm."

"Yes, yes, I don't know any longer that that's the forest, and I feel as if I could not see. Stand still a moment. There is a doctor up there with her, who knows her, and others 'll be coming, who know her; he who was with us, is her brother, and now they'll come and fetch our Irmgard and take her away with them."

"If she wishes to go away, and consents in her right senses, then we can have nothing against it," said Hansei soothingly, "but this I say, and no one'll get me from it: so long as she's ill, and can't say herself what she wishes, I won't suffer them to do anything with her. I am Hansei, and I am her protector, and I'll let nothing happen to her — now I beg you, stand by me and don't interfere; you know, when I say a thing, it is so."

"Yes, yes, you're right," chimed in Walpurga, and Hansei's resolute words seemed to infuse physical strength into her, for she ascended the steep mountain path without the slightest difficulty, indeed it almost seemed to her as if Hansei had taken her up in his arms along with the child. Filled with this idea, she said suddenly:

"Don't you remember? you once wanted to carry me, at home there on the lake. Oh! good God, I feel as if we must have been then very different beings, for we knew nothing at all of the world."

"We have not come off badly in knowing something of it and in having something of it," replied Hansei. His voice was loud and the child awoke. "There, now run again," he said.

They halted a little; Hansei remembered his piece of bread, and putting a good bit of it into his mouth, he said, pointing towards the valley with his knife:

"Over yonder runs our stream, and it's only an hour from here to the little town, where Stasi lives."

"Only an hour from here?" burst forth Walpurga, "then I'll go there. That's the best help, the only help. Hansei, do you go on with the child, straight up to the pasturage; and I'll follow soon from the town, and I'll bring something good with me."

"Wife, are you mad? Don't make me go crazed too. You want to go away now? Just as you're so near her who is dangerously ill?"

"Then I must tell you: the queen is down yonder, and the queen alone can help. God keep you Hansei, and you too, Burgei, I'll soon follow you."

Away she ran, down through the forest, towards the stream, along the banks, on to the town.

"Where is mother? mother! mother!" cried the child.

"Be quiet," consoled Hansei, "mother has another child down there, and he's a prince, and he'll send you golden clothes."

"Is he a bewitched prince, whom mother is setting free? What is he then now?"

"Yes, he is bewitched," said Hansei, hushingly; he thought by saying so to have done with it.

"But what is he bewitched into then?" asked the child.

"Into a cuckoo. But now leave me quiet. Not a word more! Be quiet!"

Full of strange thoughts, the father and his child went up the mountain. Hansei did not understand how his wife could leave her friend just now and go

to the queen — perhaps they were in some way linked together.

Hansei shook his head; he always cast from him things which he could not disentangle. It was now to be seen what could be done for the sick girl. That was the main matter. He squared his shoulders, he was resolved if the physician thought it well, to carry Irmgard in his arms down to the farm.

The child however walked along, looking all wonder and amazement.

"He's calling, he's calling!" she said softly. "My mother is freeing you."

A cuckoo called in the wood, through which the noonday sun was gleaming; his call sometimes sounded nearer, sometimes further off, and then he flew away over the traveller's heads, calling after his wont in his flight.

Hansei and the child reached the pasturage. The uncle and Gundel met them sorrowfully.

"She still lives, but it can't be for long," said the uncle, as he dried his tears with his sleeve. "The doctor does not allow any of us to go to her any longer. But where's the mistress?"

"She's coming after us," replied Hansei; he had enough to do to keep off the cows, for they knew their master, and came up to him, in order as their wont was, to have a handful of salt from him; but to-day he had forgotten to bring it with him, and what they had up here, was all in the room, which might not now be entered.

Hansei ordered the herd boy to drive the cows far away, so that the sick might not hear the sound of the bells. That was all that he could now do for Irma. He sat down sadly on the seat in front of the

hut, took up a piece of carved wood which lay on the ground and contemplated it all over, as if he were amazed at it. He sat thus for a long time. Then he gave Burgei into Gundel's care, and went along the road on the other side of the mountain leading towards the little town, that he might meet his wife. But she came not. He went further into the wood, and to-day, as usual, when he came up here, he was vexed that on the rocks which belonged to his property, there should stand such beautiful trees, which could not be got at to fell them. A magpie, which was sitting on the high branches of a beautiful fir-tree, chattered, and seemed to be ridiculing him. As he drew his whole hand again and again over his face, Hansei began to grow conscious of what sort of things had occupied his thoughts, now in the midst of all his misery. It was nothing wrong — that it was not, but these things did not belong to such a time, and again, as if he were now experiencing his sorrow for the first time, he was overwhelmed with distress.

He turned back and went towards the hut. The physician was coming out.

"You are the peasant, I conclude?" he asked.

"Yes. And you are the doctor?"

"Yes."

"And how is it?"

"I do not think she will die before evening."

The tears came into Hansei's eyes.

The uncle begged Gunther for permission to fetch out the little chamois kid. It was granted. He brought it out, with a step scarcely audible, gave it something to drink, and carried it back again to its place at the sick girl's feet.

"She opened her eyes and nodded at me, but she didn't speak a word, and then she closed her eyes again," said the uncle.

Hansei begged to be allowed to see Irma once more. He was permitted to look through the crevice, when Gunther again went into the sick room. Hansei turned again towards the road which led to the town, weeping the whole way from the very depth of his heart.

"Uncle is right, she's become like an angel," he said to himself.

The calf, born on the first day of their life at the pasturage, seemed conscious of especial claims on the peasant; it kept running after him in spite of all repulses, and lowed its demands for salt. Hansei satisfied it with the last piece of bread, which he still had with him.

He was obliged to sit down in the forest, and here he wept and looked again and again confusedly around him; how was it possible, that the sun should be shining so beautifully and the cuckoo calling and the hawk screaming, and there a human being breathing her last

"What can Walpurga want now of the queen? Yonder, up there's her place," he thought again and again within himself.

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER.

WALPURGA had hastened down the mountain by the side of the stream. She soon saw the little town and the dairy farm, on the pointed roof of which, a gay standard was fluttering.

Walpurga sat down on a rock by the stream to recover her breath. A cuckoo flew past her up the mountain.

"That's a bad token," said she to herself.

She walked on towards the dairy farm. Through the iron trellis work, she saw a boy playing in the garden; he wore a light dress, and a hat with a feather surmounted his long fair curls. Her heart felt as if it must burst, and she grasped convulsively one of the iron rods in the railing. Then she walked on towards the entrance to the garden.

"Frau von Gerloff . . . the prince . . . my child, my child," she cried, as she rushed towards the prince, and kneeled down in the grass, embracing and kissing him.

The boy screamed aloud.

"Oh! that is his voice!" cried Walpurga.

Frau von Gerloff, startled at the moment, stood as if rooted to the spot, then she approached, and repelled Walpurga; servants also came forward. — The prince hid himself against Frau von Gerloff.

Walpurga knelt in the grass and could not rise.

"He knows me no longer! He knows me no longer, and I am his nurse!" she lamented, looking confusedly at those around. Her voice seemed to exercise an influence upon the child. He turned his face round, it was flushed with red, and a tear still hung on his eyelashes, though every feature smiled.

"Good day," said he, in the mountain dialect, — it was the expression in which he had been practised for his residence in the country.

"Good day, he can say . . . oh, he can speak too! Oh! good heavens, he can speak! Now say, Walpurga, once, child! Can you say Walpurga?"

"Walpurga!" repeated the boy.

The queen came past, accompanied by the Countess Brinkenstein and Paula.

Walpurga was on the point of hastening to her, but the queen repelled the movement, and ordered Frau von Gerloff to take the prince away. The prince was led out of the garden; but he looked back again at Walpurga, who nodded to him and quite forgot that the queen was standing before her, till the latter said:

"You have forced your way in here, and you must know well that we do not wish to see you again, and you know too, why."

"I will not defend myself now, I want something else," pleaded Walpurga.

"What do you want?" asked the queen.

With hasty words, though often pausing and sighing deeply, Walpurga said:

"Lady Queen, one may be looked upon as base, one may be held in no repute in the world, and yet be honest. You and I are now healthy, and we can settle that another time. Lady Queen, I have two words to say, quite alone with you. Lady Queen, for the sake of all pity, — it will make you happy in your dying hour, and Lady Queen, you also must die — Lady Queen, I beg you for the sake of all pity, listen to me, alone, only for one minute? Send the others away. We have no time to lose!"

The queen signed to Countess Brinkenstein and Paula, that they should retire. She stood alone with Walpurga, and the latter — it gave her a pang at her heart — said:

"Irma lives."

"What do you say?"

"She may be dead at this very moment, she lies in a dying state."

"I don't understand you — are you mad?"

"No, Lady Queen. Sit down . . . here on this seat . . . you are trembling all over. I have done it awkwardly, but I could not do it otherwise, and what does it matter now? Do with me as you will — Irma lives. Perhaps only to-day, perhaps no longer. Lady Queen, you must go with me, you must go to her. It is the only thing, which she can yet have on earth . . . one word one hand"

Countess Brinkenstein and Paula came forward, when they saw that the queen was leaning back as pale as death. When the queen heard the rustling of their dresses, she raised herself, and said:

"Walpurga, say once more what you have told me."

Walpurga repeated that Irma still lived, and added that she now had been concealed with her for nearly four years, and that Gunther was with her up yonder on the pasturage.

The two ladies stood paralysed, but Walpurga turned again to the queen, and exclaimed:

"For God's sake, don't delay a minute longer! come with me to her! Lady Queen, in there, lives my Stasi, who turned the prayer for the queen that time to me. Lady Queen, if you do not yourself forgive, how can they still pray for you? Lady Queen, think how you felt that time in that solemn night! Lady Queen, stand up, cast all behind you, and keep your good heart alone. Lady Queen. . . ."

"Leave her Majesty in peace!" interrupted Countess Brinkenstein.

But Walpurga continued:

"Lady Queen, when you die, you'll have no court-ladies with you and nothing — For one hour in your life, leave everything behind, and come with me alone, and ask nothing further: She'll be dead before the night sets in! You can do a good deed while it is day, which will last through all eternity."

"I will go to her, — I must!" said the queen, rising, and walking towards the house; her step was quick and her cheeks glowed.

"Your Majesty," remonstrated the mistress of the chamber, "the king is out riding, and is coming to dinner at the waterfall. Will not your Majesty wait?"

"No!" replied the queen: her tone was sharp, it seemed as if this formal question had interrupted and infringed upon a bitter chain of thought. "I beg," she added, "to be allowed to act on my own responsibility."

"Your Majesty, there is no carriage road to the pasturage," added Countess Brinkenstein in a softer manner.

"But there's a horse-way up to the very last bit, almost up to the hut," replied Walpurga; "and there's Stasi's husband, he's a forester and he knows all the roads; I'll call him."

She hastened to the inspector's office and brought him out with her.

The inspector confirmed the fact, that they could drive a good distance, and that then they could ride.

The queen ordered that riding horses should be sent forwards at once; she then retired to her apartments, and soon afterwards, she drove up the mountain with Paula, Sixtus and Walpurga; two lacqueys sitting on the rumble behind.

The betrothed of the man who had loved Irma, and the wife of the man, whose love Irma had requited, sat side by side, hastening to her dying bed.

It was not till they were on their way, that they regained composure.

Walpurga told them everything. There was little to relate of Irma's uniform life, so she lingered all the more upon her uncle's account of how Irma had travelled to the capital with him in disguise and had once again seen the queen and the young prince at the summer palace. Often interrupted by tears, she then told how Irma had nursed her dying mother, and how her mother, who had known everything, had given Irma her blessing at her very last hour.

The queen held her handkerchief to her eyes, and extended her hand silently to Walpurga.

The more Walpurga told, the more pure and elevated did Irma appear. The queen turned to Paula, and said:

"That is a life in death — it must have required an inconceivably heroic strength."

"There are saints even in our own days," replied Paula; "All that ever in times of old was great, and beautiful, and genuine in the world, is still surely existing, though perhaps scattered and veiled from view."

In the midst of all her present deep sorrow, the queen's eye sparkled with a ray of pleasure. She looked at Paula; Gunther was no longer with her, but in future she would have his better part in the presence of his child.

Again Walpurga told of that morning by the lake, and then she depicted Irma's beautiful work, but she ob-

served presently that the queen no longer listened, and did not speak.

Silently they drove along.

The carriage road terminated; they left the carriage, and continued the journey on horseback. —

Soon after the queen had driven off, the king returned with Bronnen to the farm after his morning sport. They were full of invigorated strength, and the king inquired if his consort had already repaired to the waterfall, for she had expressed the wish to sketch there.

Countess Brinkenstein was in a state of embarrassment, which, for the first time in her life, was on the point of depriving her of all composure. She had of course all the deep sympathy with Irma, that was due; but — she had lived concealed, and she ought now to die concealed. What was the use of these repeated agitations? She shook her head at those eccentric and capricious beings, who are not once for all properly dead, when they have been long lamented and forgotten.

She now, with faltering voice, informed the king, whither the queen had driven and what had occurred; she scarcely ventured to lay any stress on the fact that the queen had gone, upon her own responsibility and contrary to all court regulations, alone with Paula and Dr. Sixtus.

The king stood still, looking down and for some time spoke not a word. The very ground seemed trembling before his gaze, everything reeled as in an earthquake and the horror of destruction passed through his mind.

All that he had suffered in his innermost heart for years and had expiated, now rose before him again. He had laboured, wrestled, and renounced, and no

one had thanked him, least of all his own heart, for he was one of those burdened with guilt, who desire to do good, and feel constrained to acknowledge in deep humility, that they are yet allowed to do so.

He pressed his clenched hand tremblingly against his brow, his cheeks burned, and a feverish chilliness came over him; "Thank Providence," he exclaimed to himself, "that she still lives. The guilt of death is removed from my soul. And she too shall acknowledge what a punishment I have endured, and what I have become. . . ."

In these few minutes, the king had lived anew all the secret tortures of those past years. As if emerging from the lower world, he now looked around him. The trees, the houses, the mountains, still stood firm, no earthquake had disturbed them. He looked at Bronnen, and holding out to him his icy cold hand, he whispered scarcely audibly,

"Then your presentiment that time at the hunting seat has become true."

His voice was hoarse. He ordered fresh horses to be saddled, and a second carriage sent on.

He rode with Bronnen after the queen.

NINETEENTH CHAPTER.

THE queen rode up the mountain, and beside her walked Walpurga. The sunlight already fell obliquely through the treetops across the road, which Gunther, accompanied by the uncle, had taken the night before; and slight traces were still left of the little streams, which had yesterday traversed the path.

The queen said not a word, but she often gazed at Walpurga, and a long succession of remembrances and recollections passed through her mind. There goes the woman by thy side, she thought, who was called by thy wish from her native home — at that time that thou and the king and Gunther were, sitting under the weeping ash, and thou wert mild and forgiving towards the fallen — and Gunther said: "Thou art worthy that thousands should pray for thee." Wast thou so then? Art thou worthy of it now? Thou wast then not yet wronged, |thou hadst not then experienced injustice, and it was easy to appear forgiving — and now, when thou hast been injured, thou art immersed in bitterness, in hatred, and pride of virtue, and thou hast taken pleasure in it. He changed his life, he cast aside everything little, paltry, and vain, and devoted his whole soul to his people in faithful labour, and thou! thou wert ever more austere and inflexible, because thou wast so virtuous. Art thou so then? What is a virtue that only lives to itself? And she who erred so heavily, has she not expiated still more heavily? Higher and superior to thee stands the sinning one. For me she died, and what have I derived from this death? I have left my husband alone in his heavy work, I have forsaken him in his extremest need. I have only lived for myself; for to live for my child was only to live for myself — Thou hast exercised charity to the poor and the helpless. But thy duty? Thy nearest duty? Thou couldst not overcome thyself . . . and thou hast ventured to say of thyself that thou wast capable of the highest, and: "if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out?" Gunther was right: no one can deliver thee but thyself, for no one can so tell thee the truth as thou thyself.

What hast thou done in the long years, in which she has been wrestling for perfection, and he has strengthened himself in noble works for his people? I am the sinning one — thou must still live, Irma, thou must, so that I may say to thee: I shall have no deliverance if thou diest, without having pardoned me, without thy pardon of me!

Filled with such thoughts the queen rode up the mountain, and freer and more free did her mind become. The ban was loosened, a pressure was removed, which had exerted its sway over everything.

"Is it still far?" she asked Walpurga.

Again a fear came over her — If Irma no longer lived, if she could no longer seek freedom for them both in her living presence? — Her heart beat — She laid her hand upon it as if pulsation must cease, when it ceased in the heart above. Ever deeper within her mind, ever more vividly and fervently rose before her a vision of Irma's glorified condition, and she herself seemed so small.

"We're soon at the end now," said Walpurga.

A voice from above called:

"Walpurga!"

The voice echoed again and again from the rocky mountains.

"That is my husband," said Walpurga to the queen, and equally loudly she called out:

"Hansei!"

His voice answered from above.

Hansei approached, and when he saw the grand gentlemen and ladies on horseback, and the livery servants, he took off his hat, and wiped his eyes with his hand, as if he wondered whether he saw aright.

"How is it?" asked Walpurga.

"She still lives, but it won't be for long. I have been an hour away already, and who knows what has happened meanwhile. But the doctor is with her."

"We can't ride any further" said the inspector.

The queen and Paula dismounted — Sixtus and the servants followed. They went up the last ascent.

"She there in the large white silk mantle, she's the queen," said Walpurga in a significant manner to Hansei.

"It's all one to me. Our Irmgard is more than any one else to me. What queen!" he replied. "When a human being is dying, they're all round pretty much the same; we must all of us die, and then it's one what we have been for these couple of years."

The queen only gave a short glance at Hansei. She hastened eagerly on, signed to Paula to remain behind, and hurried on alone. She was without all train of attendance, but, at her right and left, before and behind her, went the spirits of fear and deliverance — and she had to force her way through them. Fear cried: "Irma is dead! thou comest too late!" and this impeded her footsteps and robbed her of breath. Deliverance cried: "Arouse thyself — why tarriest thou? thou art free — thou bringest peace, and gainest peace!"

Thus wrestled the powers within her and around her, and she seemed to waive them aside with her hands.

Fear gained the ascendancy; and, like a cry for help, there burst from the lips of the queen:

"Irma! Irma!" and "Irma! Irma!" resounded again and again from the heights. The wide world around was calling the name of Irma . . .

Irma was lying in the room within, and Gunther was sitting by her side. She breathed with difficulty, she scarcely turned her head, and only now and then slightly opened her eyes.

Gunther had taken up with him Eberhard's notebook, and he found an opportunity in which he could read the daughter those words of her father: "In the day and hour when my mind is obscured, may this tend to enlighten me!"

When he read the words — "in the lost and apparently ruined, there is still something divine," Irma had raised herself; but she leant back again, and signed that he should go on reading. He read:

"And if my eye grows dim, I have seen the eternal, I have looked into eternal things. Far above all distortion and self-distinction, the undying mind soars aloft."

Gunther ceased, and laid the pamphlet on Irma's bed. She held her hand upon it. After a time she raised her hand, pointed to her brow, and said, closing her eyes:

"And yet he punished me."

"Whatever he did to you," replied Gunther, "he did not do with his free pure will; the paroxysm of a dying moment effected it. In the spirit of your father — and so truly as I desire that in my dying hour the truth may live within me — I free you from the burden which he has placed upon you. You have freed yourself. Pardon him, as I feel sure he pardoned you. He would now bless you, as I bless you. Remember him in love — for the love which, in innermost truth, he bore to you."

Irma clasped Gunther's hand which he had laid

upon her brow, and kissed it. Then she said many times without turning round, as if to herself: "Remain with me."

For hours Gunther sat by Irma's bed. Nothing was to be heard but her painful breathing, which became more and more difficult.

When now the voice of the mountains echoed her name, Irma raised herself, and looked right and left.

"Do you hear it too?" asked she. "My name . . . by voices, voices everywhere, voices —"

The door opened, and the queen entered!

"Oh! at last you are there!" breathed out Irma, with a deep sigh. She raised herself with a last effort, and kneeled in the bed; her long hair fell over her, her eyes sparkled strangely, she folded her hands, and then stretching out her arms, she cried in a heart-breaking tone:

"Pardon, pardon!"

"Pardon me, Irma; my sister Irma!" sobbed the queen, clasping her in her arms and kissing her.

A smile passed over Irma's face; then, uttering a loud cry of pain, she sank back and was dead.

The queen kneeled beside her bed; and Walpurga, who had stood in the background, stepped forward and closed Irma's eyes.

All was silent; only the deep sobbing of the queen and Walpurga was to be heard.

Steps approached from without.

"Where? — where is she?" cried the voice of the king.

Gunther opened the door, and signed hushingly with both his hands.

"Dead?" cried the king.

Gunther nodded. He signed to Walpurga, and she left the room with him.

The king threw himself silently on his knees beside the corpse.

The queen rose, and laying her hand on her husband's head, said:

"Pardon me, as I have pardoned."

The king seized the offered hand, and hand in hand they both gazed long at the face of the dead, on which a mild and smiling expression rested. They seemed not to be able to separate themselves from the sight. At last the queen took off her white mantle and spread it over the form of death.

They left the hut.

The declining sun lighted the sky with its purple glory, and all around was silent and still.

Gunther approached the queen, and gave her the journal wrapped up in the bandage, saying: "This is Irma's bequest to your Majesty."

The queen went up to Walpurga, silently held out her hand to her, and kissed the child which Walpurga was carrying in her arms.

The king gave his hand to Hansei, and said: "I thank you; I will see you again."

The little pitch-man went up to the king and queen, and said:

"May God reward you for having come up here — she deserved it."

The king and the queen went alone towards the forest; their suite kept back.

TWENTIETH CHAPTER.

THE king and the queen went into the forest.

They went hand in hand.

The night drew on. The tops of the trees rustled.

The queen stood still. With all her ardent love so long repressed and impelled by the deepest agitation of feeling, she embraced her husband. She kissed his mouth, and eyes, and brow, and said:

"I have prayed the departed for forgiveness. She died with my kiss. I now beg you for forgiveness, you who are living. You have both expiated heavily — she solitary with herself, you solitary with me."

She drew out an amulet which she wore concealed near her heart. It was the king's betrothal ring.

"Take this ring once more from my hand," said the queen.

"We are espoused anew," replied the king. He put the ring on his finger, and clasped the queen in his arms; and while he held her in embrace, her head rested near his heart.

With a firm step they proceeded onwards down the mountain. The carriages were waiting below.

Bronnen and Sixtus went down the mountain with Paula, followed by the servants.

The king and queen drove alone, Paula and Sixtus drove in the other carriage, and Bronnen went back again to Gunther at the pasturage.

The newly united arrived at the dairy-farm. The first thing they did was to go to the apartments of the crown prince. They stood by the bed of their child, and the king said:

"Just as he now is sleeping, his harmless childish mind has not yet been sensible of our division. Happy is it for us, that with awakening powers he will only see our unity and love until death."

The king and queen sat by the lamp reading all night the journal of the solitary worldling.

Above in the hut Gunther and Bronnen lingered. For some time Gunther sat with Walpurga, and held her hand as he told her that her full innocence had now come to light. Walpurga nodded silently.

The cows came to the hut, evidencing by their snorting and lowing that instinct had brought them to the abode of death; and scarcely were they driven away than they unexpectedly returned again.

In the night the little pitch-man dug a grave, there at the spot where Irma had so often lain, and many a tear was shed over his work; and once when he paused to take breath, he said to himself: "When the chamois kid can run, I'll let it go into the forest."

Early in the morning, Irma was buried. Hansei, the little pitch-man, Gunther, and Bronnen carried her, Walpurga and the child walking behind. Gundel and Franz had covered the sides and bottom of the grave with Alpine roses. Mutely was Irma laid to rest, in the white mantle of the queen, just as the blush of morn appeared.

In the valley below, the king and the queen had been reading Irma's bequest. The day was now breaking. They looked at the rosy morning, upwards towards the mountains where Irma lay buried on the heights.

THE END.



